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THE BEQUEST OF
EVERT JANSEN WENDELL
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CRÆSUS,
KING OF LYDIA;

A Tragedy,
IN FIVE ACTS:

BY
MAJOR RICHARDS.

SECOND EDITION,
REVISED BY THE AUTHOR.

LONDON:
LONGMAN, GREEN, LONGMAN, & ROBERTS.

1861.

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**HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY
FROM
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1918**

LONDON:

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TO HIS FRIEND,

GEORGE B. C. LEVERSON,

ASSOCIATED WITH HIM IN SOME OF THE BEST AND WORTHIEST

UNDERTAKINGS, AS HE DEEMS THEM, OF HIS LIFE,

This Play is Inscribed,

WITH EVERY SENTIMENT OF REGARD AND ESTEEM,

BY THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION.

THE first edition of this Play was published anonymously, in the year 1845, and, in spite of the faults and imperfections with which it abounded, was most favourably received by the critics. This will be seen by the subjoined extracts from the contemporary press.* Although the *Times* objected to the combination of the "Elizabethan and Classical" style with "some leaven of the present day," which "difficult task" it considered the Author to have attempted, yet that journal bestowed on it two notices of considerable length, and its verdict was, on the whole, most flattering. In quoting these critical opinions the Author runs the risk of being charged with vanity; but he ventures to claim the right of recording the praises bestowed on the then anonymous offspring of his imagination, not so much in order to influence later judgment on its merits and demerits, as to bespeak attention and interest, which he is aware are very seldom bestowed upon an unacted Play.

* Of this Play, when published in 1845, the *Times*, in its first notice, said—"He (the Author) has abundance of images at command, and oftentimes much felicity of expression;" and in a second notice spoke of "the beauty of a great portion of the Play," and of "isolated parts of the most refined and beautiful description." After quoting several passages, the *Times* further observed—"The Author's picture of canine life and the story of the lion-hunt are remarkably fine. Landseer might find a good subject in the Prince (Atys), addressing his hounds in the kennel, and lamenting his confinement from sport. There is a delightful quaintness in the whole passage, ending 'whereat the hound emphatic wags his tail.'" After describing the concluding speech of Cæsus as "simple, grand, and touching," the *Times* wrote that "no one can deny his (the Author's) claim to great power and poetic feeling." The *Morning Post*, advertng to Cæsus, said—"They who perused it must have marked with admiration the glowing imagination, vigorous language, and manly sentiments which were strewed in careless haste about its pages." The *Athenæum* admitted its "power both of poetic idea and treatment," and the *Dispatch* called it a "magnificent tragedy," adding—"for a magnificent one it really is."

On the Tragedy, as it now stands, the Author confesses himself to have bestowed some care. He pleads now neither youth nor haste, as an excuse for its defects. He may, perhaps, be allowed to state, that, even in its early and imperfect form, it received the warm commendation of the late Mr. Justice Talfourd, who predicted its future success. It has now elicited the favourable appreciation of a few literary friends, who have evinced a strong interest in its re-publication.

And now a word as to the subject and its treatment may not be amiss. After the Play was published, the Author met with a remark of the celebrated German philosophical critic, Schlegel, to the effect that the story of Cræsus was the finest subject he knew of for a drama, and that it was strange no one had attempted it. As for the mixture of the Elizabethan and Classical style, the Author ventures, with great deference to the opinion to which he has alluded as expressed by the critic of the *Times*, to maintain and defend his view. A strictly classical drama has always appeared to him to want soul and passion. Anachronisms are, of course, to be shunned in the treatment of an antique story; but in dealing with the period in which Sophocles wrote, surely it is unnecessary to endeavour to imitate the style of Sophocles. Otherwise, one might as well insist on the female characters being played by male performers, and on the re-establishment of the use of the mask and cothurnus of the ancient votaries of Thespis. Love was not a usual element of the Greek Drama, although the ancients were by no means insensible to that passion; but is there any reason why it should be banished from a Tragedy, whose story is chosen from a classical repertory? It would be as reasonable to do this, as to insist that no painter of a mediæval or classical subject should use a lately invented colour.

The Play is, the Author hopes, sufficiently classical, although not a strictly classical Play in the pedantic sense.

The characters are intended to be human and of any age, such as we can imagine them and as they can be pictured in modern language and conception. Let this effort, then, be considered as a combination of the Elizabethan and Classical style with a modern leaven, and if this condemn it, the Author can only plead that he could not write it in good Greek, or find readers, had he been capable of so doing. With regard to the modern leaven, it is true that Julius Cæsar cannot well be introduced, save in the popular rampant burlesque of the day, speaking of street-railways, nor ought a serious Cleopatra to figure in crinoline, nor Boadicea to preside over a tea-table. But pride, passion, avarice, jealousy, and the extremes of poverty and wealth, have been the characteristics of human life in all ages. As far as we can gather from Herodotus, the reign of Cræsus was distinguished for the most extraordinary accumulation of wealth by the few, and the most abject poverty of the labouring classes. It is stated by that picturesque historian that the game of astragaloï, a species of dice, was invented by the political economists of that epoch, in order that the lower classes might eat and play on alternate days—a fable, if it be one, of extraordinary significance. The Author does not, therefore, drag the Irish or Indian famine into his Play; the suggestion, if there be any, belongs to the world-history of the human race. The μέγας ὄλεος which Æschylus denounced was with its retributive effects the characteristic also of Rome—it may yet be that of other countries. If the fatal passion of Paris for Helen were made the subject of a modern classical Elizabethan drama, would the treatment of the story of that celebrated co-respondent of antiquity

necessarily be deemed a too pointed allusion to the numerous delinquencies which call for the modern Augean labours of Sir Cresswell Cresswell? The following was actually an objection on the part of the *Athenæum*, viz.: that the "co-presence of wealth and want," which then furnished so much matter to the writer of the Play, and which he has since enlarged upon, misled the critic to believe "that the Author meant to allegorize the 'Condition of England question' in a Greek Drama." Is, then, the state of things represented in the Play analogous to the "Condition of England?" If so, what grander lesson could a dramatist, whose noblest aim should be to convey a moral to his countrymen and mankind, propose to teach than this? The Author has not said that Lydia is England; the discovery rests with others that England is Lydia, and does but prove that, nationally as well as socially, human crimes and errors repeat themselves in distant climes and ages, evoking the same punishment and followed by similar catastrophes.

The female characters of the Play are the invention of the Author. The name of Arienis is the only female Lydian name, to the best of his knowledge, extant. The *Times* objected to his delineation of Cræsus, as that monarch was "renowned for his piety." Undoubtedly he was a magnificent donor to priests, temples and oracles; but the awful chastisement supposed to be inflicted by the wrath of the gods on his pride affords one of the most striking and interesting episodes in classic story. It is true that most violent despots are very "pious," *e. gr.* the present Queen of Spain, as the shrine of our Lady of Atocha can testify. So, probably, was "Cræsus, King of Lydia"—after his fashion.

LONDON, *August 1st*, 1861.

The following is a translation by LAURENT, of the chapters of Herodotus, containing the story upon which this Tragedy is founded.

AFTER the departure of Solon, the dire indignation of the gods visited Cræsus; in consequence, it may be presumed, of his presumption that he was the most happy of men. Forthwith, a vision stood over him in his sleep, which portended the truth respecting the calamities that were about to befall his son: for Cræsus had two sons; one of whom was grievously afflicted, being dumb; the other, however, was by far the first in all things, among all his cotemporaries; his name was Atys. This Atys, accordingly, it was, whom the dream pointed out to Cræsus, that he should lose him, pierced by a sharp point of iron. When the king awoke, and turned over in his mind the occurrence, he dreaded the accomplishment of the dream, and took a wife to the youth; and, although hitherto wont to place him at the head of the Lydian forces, he no longer sent him on such business: spears, javelins, and all such instruments as men use in war, he removed from the men's apartments, and laid up in the back chambers, lest any suspended weapon might fall down upon his son. At the time he was busied with his son's wedding, a man arrived at Sardis, oppressed with calamity; his hands were sullied; and he was by birth a Phrygian, one of the royal family. This person entered the palace of Cræsus, and supplicated to receive purification,* according to the common laws.

* The scholiast of Homer informs us (see ver. 48, last Book of the Iliad), that it was customary among the ancients, for whoever had committed an involuntary murder, to leave his country, and fly to the house of some powerful individual. There, covering himself, he

Cræsus purified him;—the ceremonies of expiation are nearly the same with the Lydians as with the Hellenes;—when, therefore, he had performed the accustomed rites, he inquired of the suppliant whence he came, who he was, addressing him thus: “Good man! who are you? and “from what part of Phrygia have you come to my hearth? “what man or what woman have you slain?” “I am, “Sire,” answered the fugitive, “the son of Gordius, and “grandson of Midas: I am named Adrastus: unwittingly, “I have slain my own brother: driven away by my father, “and reft of all, I stand here.” Cræsus answered in these words: “You are the child of my friends, and you are “come to your friends: abide in my palace where you “shall know no want: and bear with this calamity as “meekly as you can; you will be the greatest gainer.” Adrastus, accordingly, took up his residence in the palace of Cræsus.

At this same time, a huge monster of a boar made his appearance in the Mysian Olympus: rushing down from that mountain, he ravaged the cultivated lands of the Mysians. The inhabitants had, repeatedly, gone out against this animal: they could do him no harm, but were compelled to suffer his devastations: at last, a deputation from the Mysians came before Cræsus, and spoke thus: “Sire, a vast monster of a boar has appeared in our land, “and devastates our cultivated fields: we have endeavoured “to catch him, but cannot. We, therefore, now entreat

sat down, and entreated to be purified. No author has described more minutely or exactly the ceremonies observed at the expiations than Apollonius Rhodius. The guilty person sits down on the hearth, fixes his eyes on the ground, and sticks the instrument of the murder in the earth. The person whose protection he implores discovers by these signs that he wishes to be expiated of a murder. He then takes a suckling pig, slaughters him, and smears the hands of the suppliant with the blood. He next uses lustral waters, invoking Jove the Expiator. Every thing that had served for the expiation is then removed out of the house. Cakes are then burnt, water poured out, and the gods invoked, to appease the anger of the Furies, and to propitiate Jove.

"you, send with us your son and some chosen youths,
 "together with dogs, so that we may drive him out of
 "the land." Such was their petition: to which Cræsus,
 remembering the warning of his dream, replied thus:
 "Make no more mention of my son: I shall not send him
 "with you; for he is but just married, and for the present
 "has to attend to that. However, I will send with you
 "some chosen Lydians, together with my whole pack;
 "and give those that go, my commands, to assist you
 "in extirpating the savage monster from your country."
 Such was his answer, with which the Mysians were content;
 when the son of Cræsus happened to come in; having heard
 what the Mysians petitioned for, and that Cræsus had
 refused to send his son with them, the youth thus
 addressed his father: "Father, formerly it was deemed
 "most befitting and worthy of my blood to frequent the
 "wars and the chase, there to gain renown: now you
 "exclude me from both these exercises, without having
 "observed any cowardice on my part, or any want of
 "spirit. With what eyes must I now appear to you,
 "stalking to and from the market? What ideas shall I
 "give of myself to my fellow citizens? To what a man
 "will my bride say she is united? Either, therefore,
 "permit me to join this hunting-party, or convince me by
 "some reason that you are justified in doing as you do."
 "I have not seen in you, my son," replied Cræsus, "either
 "cowardice, or any thing to displease me; it is not on
 "that account I act thus: a vision has appeared before
 "me in a dream, when I was buried in sleep, and warned
 "me that you will have but short time to live, for you will
 "be destroyed by a point of iron. In consequence of this
 "vision, I have hastened this marriage; and have refused
 "to send you on the present enterprise, having care to

"preserve you, if by any means I can, during my life ;
 "for you are my only son : the other, afflicted in his
 "hearing, I reckon not as mine." The young man replied :
 "To have beheld such a vision, dear father, is indeed an
 "excuse for keeping such a watch over me : but you mis-
 "understand the dream ; you do not see its real meaning :
 "and it is right I should explain to you. You say that
 "the dream boded I was to die by a point of iron, but
 "where are the hands of a boar ? where the point of iron
 "that alarms you ? Were I indeed to die by a tusk, or
 "something of that kind, it would have been prudent in
 "you to do as you do. Again, as to my dying by a spear ;
 "this is no battle with men ; therefore do give me leave
 "to go." "My son," replied the king, "it is true : you
 "beat me here in the interpretation of my dream : you
 "have conquered ; I give up, and allow you to go."

As soon as Cræsus had done speaking, he sent for the
 Phrygian, Adrastus, whom he addressed thus : "At the
 "time, Adrastus, that you were smitten with a dreadful
 "calamity—not that I reproach you with that—I then
 "expiated you, received you into my family, and minis-
 "tered to all your wants. Now, therefore—for it is your
 "duty to make me a return for the service I have rendered
 "you—I request you to be the guardian of my son, who
 "is going to the chase, lest on the road some skulking
 "thieves make their appearance to your detriment. It
 "becomes you, moreover, to go where you can make your-
 "self conspicuous by your deeds ; for that you inherit
 "from your fathers, to which you add bodily strength."
 "Sire," said Adrastus, "I would not have taken any part
 "in this enterprise ; for it is not meet that one visited
 "with my misfortune should join with his more happy
 "compeers, nor have I the wish ; frequently even I have

“refrained myself : but now, as you yourself urge me, and
 “it becomes me to oblige you—for I am bound in grati-
 “tude to make a return—I am ready to do as you desire.
 “I pledge myself to bring back your son, whom you com-
 “mand me to watch over, safe and sound, as far as
 “depends on his guardian.”

After Adrastus had returned this answer to Cræsus, they departed, provided with chosen youths and dogs : arriving at Mount Olympus, they tracked the game, and found the boar ; then standing round him, they hurled their spears : at that moment, this very man who had been purified of blood, he called Adrastus, levelled his spear at the boar, missed his mark, and hit the son of Cræsus : the youth accordingly, wounded by the spear, fulfilled the warning of the dream. Some one ran off to announce the tidings to Cræsus, and reaching Sardis, communicated an account of the hunt, and the fate of his son. Cræsus, horror-stricken at the death of his son, was still more exasperated that the deed should have been done by the very hand that he had purified of blood : sorely deploring his calamity, he invoked Jove the Expiator, attesting what he suffered at the hands of his guest : he called also on Jove as the god of Hearths and of Mutual Friendship ;—as the god of Hearths, because by admitting a stranger among his household, he had unwittingly harboured and fed the assassin of his son ;—as the god of Mutual Friendship, because, having sent him as a guard, he had found him his most cruel enemy. Soon after appeared the Lydians, bearing the dead body : behind followed the homicide ; he advanced in front of the corse, and, stretching forth his hands, gave himself up to Cræsus, bidding the king sacrifice him on the dead body : then he alluded to his first misfortune, owned that he after that misfortune

had been the instrument of death to him that had purified him, and that he deserved no longer to live. Cræsus heard the words of Adrastus, although absorbed in domestic sorrow : he took pity on him, and spoke to him thus : " My friend, you have made full reparation to me, by thus "devoting yourself to death : you are not the cause of this "misfortune, saving so far as you were the unwilling "instrument, but some god, who long since foreshowed "me what was to come to pass." Cræsus therefore performed the funeral of his son with the befitting honours. Adrastus, on the other hand, the slayer of his own brother, the slayer also of the son of his expiator, convinced that he was the most calamitous of men, went to the sepulchre, when mankind had retired to rest, and slew himself on the tomb. Cræsus, during two years, sat down in deep mourning, bewailing his son.

* * * The end of Cræsus, conquered by Cyrus, is well known. The historian relates, that there existed in Lydia during his reign the utmost extremes of wealth and poverty. The Author has somewhat crowded events together in the closing scene of the Drama, as the conquest by Cyrus did not follow until some time after the death of Atys. Such license is, however, permissible even in the historic Dramas whose subjects are of far later date.

CRÆSUS, KING OF LYDIA.

PERSONAGES REPRESENTED.

CRÆSUS, *King of Lydia.*

ADRASTUS, *a Phrygian Fugitive, Grandson of Midas.*

ATYS, *Cræsus' elder Son.*

GLAUCUS, *a Greek, friend of Adrastus.*

MELES, *a dissolute Lydian Nobleman.*

ORCETES, *an aged Huntsman.*

SADYATTES, *a ragged Philosopher.*

ARDEKNES, *a fashionable Upstart.*

CARDENES, *Chief Magistrate of Sardis.*

SOOTHSAYER ; ARTISANS ; MUSICIANS ; HUNTERS ; LYDIAN

NOBLEMEN ; ATTENDANTS ; CHORUS ; SOLDIERS ; PRIESTS ;

DEMONS ; ANTICS, &c., &c.

ARIENIS, *Daughter of Cræsus.*

LYDIS, *her Cousin.*

THONIS, *Wife of Atys.*

THE FATES.—CLOTHO, LACHESIS and ATROPOS.

THE FURIES.—ALECTO, TISIPHONE, MEGÆRA, NEMESIS,

DANCERS, WITCHES, LARVÆ, &c., &c.

CRÆSUS: KING OF LYDIA.

ACT I.

Scene 1. Night. The Three Fates, CLOTHO, LACHESIS and ATROPOS discovered sitting in the clouds. Distant view of the City of Sardis.

ATROPOS. Veiled in the clouds
O'er mortal ken,
Weaving their shrouds,
We smile at men ;
But when groans loudest
Rise from the earth
Tremble, ye proudest,
Ceased is our mirth ;
Each wretch in dying
Blames his sad fate,
Poverty sighing
Brands us with hate ;
Then Clotho wrinkled
Shakes her grey hair,
Tyrants blood-sprinkled
Sorrow must share ;
Lachesis faster
Plies the swift doom,
Red shadows past her
Sweep into gloom ;

Quick the oppressor
 Quails 'neath our frown,
 Wealth's mean possessor
 Slips from his crown :
 In yonder city
 Luxury sleeps,
 Wakening no pity
 Misery weeps.
 Sisters ! our power
 A monarch defies,
 On his head shower
 Wrath from the skies.

(Together.)

Sisters ! sisters ! it is time,
 Pride hath reached its rankest prime,
 Surfeit fierce of tyrant greed
 Long hath batted upon need ;
 Cries of suffering reach us where
 Sit we in our charmed sphere ;
 Dyed in thin blood's watery stream
 Robes of dazzling purple gleam ;
 Weft to form their texture serves,
 Spun from tortured human nerves ;
 Where Oppression feasts, behold
 Goblet, vase and shield of gold,
 Glittering bright with rare design,
 Deeds of demigods divine !
 They were forged in burning glow
 Fanned by sighs of frantic woe ;
 Tears to slake them millions shed—
 Rouse we vengeance from the Dead !

CLOTHO. Haste ! the germe of vengeance sow ;

Quicken wrath, and terrow grow ! *[The scene closes.]*

Scene 2. A rocky part of the Mysian Olympus. Thunder and lightning. Horns and cries of HUNTERS heard behind.

Enter Two HUNTERS, meeting.

FIRST HUNTER (*who is wounded*). 'Tis Heaven's wrath—no
earth-born monster. Look,
How he hath ripped mine arm!

SECOND HUNTER. A fearful gash,
Well won. Methought thou had'st him then.

FIRST HUNTER. He broke,
With one contortion of his wiry back,
My spear short, like a reed.

SECOND HUNTER. Didst thou not see
His small and fiery eyes glow at the death
Of brave Otanes, with a something more
Than mortal venom?

FIRST HUNTER. I did. 'Tis, I say,
A semblance loosed from hell to ravage earth;
By lean Destruction farrowed, to avenge
Some human insult to the gods above.

SECOND HUNTER. As, with a comrade, but just now I stood
Where we were placed, our javelin points took fire,
And burnt like torches for as long a space
As we have spoken.

FIRST HUNTER. Hush! What mocking cry
Breaks the mysterious stillness of the air?

SECOND HUNTER. The dead leaves whisper, though no eddying
blast

Swirls them around. They have a warning voice,
Bidding us to retire. Sound horn! I fear
That more have perished. [SECOND HUNTER *sounds his horn.*

Enter THIRD HUNTER, and from time to time others.

THIRD HUNTER. Never have I known
A day like this.

A HUNTER enters, staggering and wounded.

WOUNDED HUNTER. Help me, friends, hither!

[The HUNTERS show signs of fear.]

THIRD HUNTER. Cowards!

(*To WOUNDED HUNTER*) Where are you hurt?

WOUNDED HUNTER. It matters not—to death.
Leave me not here. My children! . Oh! (*faints.*)

THIRD HUNTER. Look ye to him; I go
To beard the tuskéd monster in his lair—
I, who am childless. It doth seem to me
We are the quarry. Comrades all, farewell!
If I should perish, some one of you rear
My favourite whelps; they'll be brave dogs some day.

FIRST HUNTER. He will come back no more.

[Thunder and lightning.]

AN AGED HUNTER. Woe is me! Alas,

Poor youth! he needs some witness to his end.
Hark! how the angry gods do speak above!
Black-ribbéd chasms, and solemn wide-jawed caves,
The dim sepulchral tombs of Nature's death,
Terrific bass re-echo to the skies,
Rolling in one tempestuous symphony;
And with the shock the wild clouds weep amain,
Whilst agéd trees do part with giant boughs,
That silent and unheeded fall to ground
In such tremendous clatter. Blue-forked gleams,
That seem as they would blind us here on earth,
Pierce into graves, and there light dead men's skulls
With fiery amazement; zig-zag play
At in-and-out between the ribs of death,
And, in the flash of thought arrest and quell
Corruption's labours. (*To those around him*) Off! off! Let
me go!
He shall not die unaided. Loose me, then.

SECOND HUNTER. Stay; thou art old; thy grave is in thy sight;
Thou hast no need to hurry.

FIRST HUNTER. Stay thou here
To give us counsel.

SECOND HUNTER. Age like thine should walk
With a twin brother, white-haired Wisdom.

AGED HUNTER. Hold!
A heaven-sent thought hath lit upon my soul,
And I do breathe again. What think ye, friends?
Come to our mighty neighbour, Cræsus, him
The gods' great favourite, and the spoilt of Time;
With presents rich, and importunity,
Ask him to send a chosen youthful band
With his bold son for deeds in arms renowned,
And we shall conquer: Cræsus is the friend
Of Phœbus' self.

ALL. 'Tis well. We'll do it.

[*A loud cry; two or three run out, but return instantly.*]

A HUNTER. Fly!
The monster comes, with ghastly fangs red-smeared
From the warm side of him that left us. Fly!

[*The HUNTERS assume an attitude of flight and defence on
one side, gazing with terror to the other. Scene closes.*]

*Scene 3. A Square in Sardis, with Statues of the Gods. Early
Morning.—Enter ATYS, MELES, ORCETES, ARDEKNES, and
Lydian Nobles.*

ORCETES (to ATYS). Fair Prince, good morrow! you are forth
to quaff
The earliest of the morn.

ATYS. 'Tis all, Orcetes,
Now left me. I was wont, at this bright hour,
To track the stag, thou know'st, with baying hounds

Brushing the covert side that showered sweet dew
 Upon my hunter's tunic : else, to back
 A fiery courser, with curved pastern fine,
 That late in ecstasy of freedom snuffed
 With nostril red the untainted desert air,
 Tossing his bright mane in the madcap wind,
 Teaching him new obedience, whilst I hurled
 The quick impatient javelin to the goal,
 Or loosed the biting arrow to its mark—
 But now !

ARDEKNES. 'Tis all a dream !

ATYS. Hast thou, then, heard ?

Yes ! by thy sneer, the story hath gone forth—
 Cræsus is laughed at ; his son pitied, mocked
 By every prating milksop—

ORÆTES. No ! they dare not.

MELES. Yes, it is true ; I heard it told around
 That Cræsus lately had an ugly dream
 Which perilled thy dear life, and so hath bound thee
 Rough novice to the distaff and the lute ;
 Smiling Court-scandal mocks thy manly name,
 And hints thou dost embroider passing well ;
 Some say thou lovest too well the tender heart
 Of thy young consort to desert her side—
 Methinks fair reason for a vow of peace.

ATYS. 'Tis false ! I love her, as a soldier may,
 Not to dishonour, yet it must be thus :
 My father bids me ; I have sworn, and so
 Rust helm and spear, and dogs neglected pine
 Unbreathed by sport.

ORÆTES (*to himself*). Ay, hounds to laggards turn ;
 Each in his kennel mewed to mangy sloth,
 Cankered in ear, lined 'neath his scant-haired flanks
 With livered yellows, dumb and littering o'er
 His bed of straw with scraped-up shreds and rags

To his poor, panting belly pressed. At length,
 Slow turning round on paralyzéd haunch,
 With piteous and reproachful eye, he sinks,
 And with dull, frothy wheezing, dies. (*Aloud*) No! no!
 Achilles, who a boisterous girlhood feigned
 In Scyros' petty isle, when gleamed a sword
 First on his roving eye-ball, leapt right out,
 Seizing it for his birthright; and thus seen,
 (The silken curtains furious rent aside)
 Stood armed, like Mars, in breach of sultry cloud,
 Smiling defiance to the giant crew
 That dared to scale Olympus;—then, afar,
 Thetis, on desert promontory, wept
 That all her care was vain. But had her son
 Who, fed on lions' marrow, scorned the sop
 With which they would have tamed him, wantoned still,
 Still hung the kirtle on his brawny limbs,
 Pricked by a needle in his slippered heel
 He might have died, as soon as he did die,
 Not in brave hearts and deathless song to live.

MELES. Why, what long-winded blast thy breath hath wound,
 Thou ancient huntsman—Art not dry? (*To ATYS.*) Sweet Prince,
 E'en I am here in quest of sport to-day,
 That am not wont to shiver early thus.
 Truth is, I've wagered largely and am out—

ARDEKNES. To risk some fifty staters, and then burst
 With exercise unwonted, and so die,
 Leaving his worthy heir the thirstiest rogue
 That dwells in Sarlis.

ORGETES (*to ARDEKNES.*) That would be thyself!
 Dice-cogging knave, whom wealth alone hath taught
 Respect to law, and danger in the game:
 Dost thou forget the tricks which lackeyed thee
 Up to the place whereon thou hold'st? Why, man,
 Thine own starved servants mock thy pedigree.

A LYDIAN. Claiming descent from Heraclidan line,
His heraldry a dozen needless oaths—

MELES. I do believe him Mercury's bastard kin
In fiftieth cousinship of pigmy sin.

ARDEKNES. I swear, then, by my soul—

ORCETES.

Hast thou a soul?

A thing o'erlooked in Pluto's list of crime,
And so escaped to this fantastic world
Curst in a little body like itself,
Essenced by barber who straight cut his throat
At thinking of the lot which bade him wait
Upon so mean a wretch, and tailoréd
By one who sighed —“ Ah ! why am I a tailor ?
When men like this go free and loll about
With easy independence, though they peep
Through seams of fashionable dress themselves
Nature's own craftless tailors”—Oh ! it is
The absolute sport of fate
To make that little creature grinning there
Ardeknes, not a tailor.

ATYS. Too severe !

ORCETES. On him?

(ARDEKNES *gradually steals away and retires.*)

MELES. No, upon tailors.

ATYS. Say, Orcetes,

Wherefore thou drov'st that wretched man away
With such a hail of words?

ORCETES. He is a type

Of those whom I abhor ; intruders vile,
That like a troop of chattering apes let loose
Within the precincts of Jove's temple, grin
On Fortune's worthier, giftless votaries ;
Giving false names to things, false pride to names :
Risen from nought, enriched by basest means,
He has more shame to call his father, sire,

Though he were honest (which the son is not)
Than without trembling to blaspheme high Jove,
And scoff at Heaven's great thunders.

ATYS. He is, then,

Of mean extraction ?

ORÆTES. Yes, and so doth seek
Gilding by vain attrition of the great ;
And thus he with small perseverance gains
Their vices, not their virtues.

MELES. Hem ! the last
We keep ourselves, nor can afford to lose :
So trifling a commodity were killed
E'en by the bare thought of subtraction's name ;
Our vices we can spare, and spare the thief,
Pardoning the use for thanks unto the theft
As if one robbed us of stale mistress.

ATYS. Yes,

When every upstart seeks to copy us
In luxury, impertinence and sloth,
The originals are pardoned, and the age,
Confounded in the wide-spread vulgar taint,
Loses its rightful check on vices born
Not of the blood that wantons in our veins,
But of temptation easier ministered.
(To ORÆTES.) Still thou wast too severe. The petty man
Must needs go hang himself.

ORÆTES. I know the stuff
Which I did batter. Brazen, you may beat it,
Pound it with blows, yet still it is the same,
And, where you dint it, doth but straight bulge out
In other part. Why he will kill his dog,
Strike a poor girl in spite for this reproof.
Tis well his falsehood oft defeated fails
By sheer excess. Lie sometimes lie doth kill,
A little truth had damned him blacker still.

ATYS. Enough ! methinks, indeed, you spared his crimes,
 Reproving but his follies. Did you not
 Speak of a wager made by one of you ?

ORÆTES. Othryades, a noble gentleman
 Of thine own age, hath ventured publicly
 To challenge all to throw the heavy spear
 And wrestle, who, rich Meles thinks will win,
 And so hath ventured money. Yet I know
 One who could beat him, whom we ne'er see now
 Where manly sinews struggle. Canst thou not
 For once, sweet Prince, be ours, and so dismiss
 This bug-bear dream back to the land of dreams ;
 Nor let it longer like grim sentry stand,
 Depriving thee of lawful pleasure, health,
 And all the pride of youth and manliness ?

ATYS. It may not be, Orætes ; let me not,
 I pray you, gentlemen, detain you here ;
 I bid you all good morn. Ask him who wins
 Acceptance of this ring from me, in greeting of
 His triumph.

MELES. We shall meet again, fair Prince,
 At the mid-day review to celebrate
 Thy beauteous sister's birthday festival,
 Bright Arienis.

[They all salute ATYS, and go out, except ORÆTES.]

ATYS. O my honoured friend !
 Thou heard'st the gibes of Meles when we met !
 These things distress me. Do not thou, too, add
 Thy glorious chiding to enhance my grief.
 The forest waving in the noontide heat,
 The rustling coppice where broad antlers lurk,
 The track of tuskéd boar by reedy bank,
 My comrades' play with horse and spear at eve
 Beyond the city's gates in wheeling flight—
 These bid me venture forth. The faintest breath

Of admonition from my father's lips
Should plant Olympus in my wayward path ;
And, in obedience to his mild commands,
Content ! I'll win thee yet.

ORCETES. My prince ! my prince !
Thou hast well schooled my folly. These white hairs,
The loss of mine own children, should have taught
Orcetes better, than to counsel thus
Sad disobedience, and to lightly mock
At solemn warnings, or the voice of tombs
Ringing within the sleep-distempered brain
In gloom of awful night. Forgive me ! think
These aged lips were silent, and thy love
Snatch not from fond Orcetes.

ATYS. Good old man !
Give me thine arm—nay thus, like equals, come ;
Wast thou not king of all my happiest days ?
[*Exeunt. The scene closes.*]

Scene 4. The same. Wild and barbaric music heard.—Then enter a company of the Body-guard of CRESUS. Also a number of the people, poorly clad, who crouch and keep at a distance. Then a dance of Amazons, strewing flowers and wreaths. Musicians and Chorus follow. After these, on a gorgeous car, CRESUS and his daughter ARIENIS are borne by. The Citizens all prostrate themselves, under menaces from the Soldiers, as CRESUS passes. The Army is seen defiling in the background.

CHORUS OF MEN. Fall from on high, bright orb of Day,
To deck our monarch's car,
Nor gild alone with envious ray
His glory from afar.

CHORUS OF MAIDENS. Quit thy soft empire, starry Night,
 Thy jewelled circlet yield,
 A fairer brow to gem with light,
 By love's pure kisses sealed.

AN ARTISAN. (*Staggering forward and falling down.*) I die
 for want of food. O Sun! O Night!
 Avenge this blasphemy.

[The square is darkened by an eclipse.

My prayer is heard.

Thou canst not warm their hearts to pity, Sun!

Scorch, blacken, shrivel all their marrow up—

Be worse than darkness. Thou veil'st not, O Night!

Their selfish crimes, then visit them in flame,

Crimson-apparelléd.

[Others crowd round to assist him.

Nay, give me room,

And breath to curse. The hour of doom is nigh.

I die content.

[He falls back and dies.

Enter Guards, beating back the citizens.

OFFICER. Back, slaves! The king returns this way. How
 now?

What filthy wretch is this, who hath presumed

To die here? Close at hand, great Cræsus comes,

To seek Apollo's shrine, and learn the reason

Of this strange portent. Back, ye rabble rout!

Down on your knees. Shout blessings upon Cræsus,

The favourite of Apollo and the Gods.

*[Re-enter the Procession. The Guards, busied with the
 people, omit to remove the corpse, around which the
 Dancers continue their evolutions. Scene closes.*

Scene 5. Sardis. A wretched part of the city.—Enter Sadyattes, meeting four or five Artisans from different parts.

FIRST ARTISAN. Well! Sadyattes.

SADYATTES. Ill, methinks it is.

Thou lookest but poorly.

FIRST ARTISAN. Yet have I broken fast,

And dined, and so shall sup.

SADYATTES. How? Hast thou met

A charitable priest to give thee part

Of sacrificial meat, else wasted; or hath Heaven,

With a less miracle, decked in thy path

A sumptuous table?

FIRST ARTISAN. I broke fast upon

The expectation of my staring eyes

To give reflection to a splendid pageant

Vouchsafed this day to mock our abject state;

Dined on the luxury and pompous show

Given by Cræsus to his people, and

May sup on the remembrance, if I live.

Yet I have earned a meal, if shouting loud

From growling stomach-depths "Long live the King

And his bright daughter!" merit more than dust

And curses.

SECOND ARTISAN. Then, why didst thou shout, thou fool?

FIRST ARTISAN. The hope of largess, fear of being pricked

By a too loyal trooper, who did threaten,

As 'twas, to make me find a lustier voice.

Conscience did prick me sorely to be dumb,

But lent no buckler to ward off the point,

Which, without scruple, solved the point of Conscience.

THIRD ARTISAN. Where is their conscience, who oppress us
thus?

Gulfed in the greedy maw of unjust wealth—

SADYATTES (*interrupting*). Blot on fair Nature's 'scutcheon.

Nature's laws

Are dead and buried, or like shadows roam,
Which prosperous men avoid with easy care,
Holding their robes tight round them, and the air
Wherein they walk is deafened. They eat, drink,
With curious care, forgetting those who die
For want of food despised ; they sleep well—
Iron hearts in beds of down ; but they shall wake
To a shrill summons. Vainly then were lavished
That which they now deny. O Charity !
Loosed from the awful side of Jove, descend,
And give our breath such power that it may pierce
Into their golden palaces, and frame
The one small syllable distinct of " Give !"
Lest others feebly perish. Trumpet-tongued
Speak fearful warnings, lest we sink and die.
But with our tyrants—

THIRD ARTISAN.

I would rather die,
Than owe aught to slow Charity, that finds
Ever too late its object. Morbid spy !
A pestilence upon it ! This square brow,
Whose angles trench upon the grey, scant hair,
This face with mouth at corner deep drawn down
Through anguish, care and children wanting food,
Till it is like a rude carved gravestone image,
Telling one tale alone, frowns on the thought,
Or in hate's deadly concentration smiles
To think of sorrow hoarded by old Time,
With equal measure to be meted back
To those who work our woe. Fie ! thank them for
Their cunning sympathy, or take as gifts
That which is labour's right ? This knotted arm,
These rigid limbs, this red sun-blistered breast —
Again, I say, this face, these limbs, this heart

Cry "Work and labour!" and by these I'll live
 Or die, and curse the smooth, soft-sandalled lords
 Who owe to me their living. I must go;
 My babes, in dreams, perchance, cry out for food;
 My patient wife, with sharp, quick stare of pain,
 Looks to the door, and wonders why I come not.
 What did I say? Ha! ha! I had forgotten—
 I have no wife or child. Too late! too late! [*He rushes out.*]

FIRST ARTISAN. Excess of misery hath stamped a scene
 Upon his brain, that to no circumstance
 Of time or place will yield. 'Tis said, his wife
 And children perished for the lack of food.
 Aid came too late. From his low door, whose steps
 Within go down, he drove his visitors
 So rudely that they fell. You see him now,
 As he hath since been: he was once, 'tis said,
 A merry soul.

SECOND ARTISAN. Well, well, perchance the king,
 Croesus himself, we need not envy much:
 If he should fall, he hath a longer flight
 Down to the depths of woe. With us, a step
 Doth reach the lowest, and consummate all;
 Then we shall wake, 'tis like, and in our turn
 To play the part of nobles. Why, who knows,
 But we shall all be Croesuses, without
 The dread of wanton Fate deceiving us,
 Kicking the beam of our prosperity?

SADYATTES. And even here the poor man doth create
 Round him his world of kindly sympathies,
 Where the usurper steals not, or in vain;
 For the small mangiest cur thanks not a king
 To be his lord, if he obedience owe
 Unto a mere starved forkéd beggar boy;
 And from the arms that bred him, were he ta'en,
 Would howl within a palace.

FIRST ARTISAN. 'Tis most true.

SADYATTES. Methought at times the king looked sad this morn,
And some one I heard say—" Who'd be a king,
That all commands, whom all obey, if Joy,
Who to the cheerful peasant sometimes comes
Unsought, he can't command, and say to Grief
'I know thee not, fly from my royal presence!'"

FIRST ARTISAN. It is reported that the tender life
Of smiling Atys, who doth love us all,
Warm as his sire is cold, and proud and stern,
Was threatened by a vision that late stood
By Cræsus' royal pillow. He hath sent
Rich offerings unto Apollo's shrine,
To bribe the Pythoness in clime afar
Who fitful raves by Delphos' magic slope,
Naming the doom of monarchs.

SECOND ARTISAN. 'Tis e'en so.

SADYATTES. With temples proud the city stands adorned—
The houseless are forgotten. Riches flow
From his wide hand to aliens—but the cry
Of hunger is arrested at his gate,
And dies away in echoed whisper sent
Back to the heart that bred it, sorrowing.

SECOND ARTISAN. But Heaven stores such echoes.

SADYATTES. This be sure of—
The wealth that might make many happy ne'er
May purchase one man's joy, nor doth the dross
Of human treasure bribe the immortal Gods,
Save to a dread requital. Not to priests
Or richest temples are the offerings made,
Whose dedication buys back happiness.
Sweet Charity is Jove's high treasurers,
And poor men's blessings her acquittances,
Which he who gains the most of outvies kings,
Though heaping altars with their gold to Heaven.

Enter a woman with a child in her arms.

WOMAN. Food ! food ! my babe is dying.

SADYATTES. *(After looking at them.)* It is dead.
Thou little atomy ! the fount is dry
That should have filled thy shrunk veins with life.

Enter a starving rabble.

No work ! no food ! no rest ! They are forbidden
To lie down in the streets. How long, ye Gods !
Shall this endure ?

A STARVING PEASANT. Alms !

SADYATTES. It is prohibited,
By royal mandate, to give alms abroad.
A nobleman, Raménes, hath accused
Five wretches to their death ; yet will I venture—
Imposture hath no hollow looks like these.
O beggary ! thou art too poor a trade
For many to embrace thee willingly.

A BEGGAR. The officers of justice are upon us—Fly !

SADYATTES. "Justice !" said'st thou ?

BEGGAR. We have no strength to fly,
Or limbs to carry us.

Enter the Chief Magistrate CARDENES, with Officers.

CARDENES. Seize them, I say !
What ! on a day like this to wander forth—
Are there not buildings open to you all ?
Can you not play at bones, astragaloi ?
A merciful invention of the State
To lull the pangs of hunger—Hunger ? Faugh !
'Tis a pretence, a lie, ye ingratitude slaves.
(To the OFFICERS) Scourge them, I tell you, lash them far and wide ;
Out, carrion ! Is there no propriety—

No law in Sardis ? Have we not built schools
 And prisons, models for the admiring world ?
 And do ye talk of starving ? Must ye beg,
 Breeding like thankless vermin as ye do ?
 Had I my will, one half should be condemned
 To dig the others' graves ; then, halved again,
 Ye should consume each other to the end,
 And purge the city of your useless presence.
 Away with them ! My brother magistrates
 Already grace the festive board of State,
 And I shall lose the sacrificial blessing.

[The Officers strike and seize the people, who shrink and huddle into corners. Meanwhile the music of the Procession is heard approaching, with cries of "Long live Cræsus !" "Live our bounteous Monarch !" "Room for the gifts unto Apollo's Shrine !" The Scene closes.]

Scene 6. Night. The Three Fates, as before.

CLOTHO. Is the seed sown ?
 A VOICE. In blood engendered too.
 LACHESIS. Is the plant grown ?
 A VOICE. Like mandrake i' the dew :
 It shall spread into a tree,
 Ere days wither seven and three.
 CLOTHO. What grip'st thou, sister, there ?
 Like swimmer's bubbling breath,
 Or like the voiceless cry
 Of a soul's agony
 Whose sudden speech brings death ?

- LACHESIS. An outcast's dying prayer,
 That trembled on the thread
 As the last slender filament I spun :
 His corpse on earth lies bare :
 Thus wealth neglects the dead,
 Though Phœbus veil in wrath the mid-day sun.
- A VOICE. The courtiers cry "a miracle !" and say
 " Phœbus, outshone, doth hide himself to-day."
- ATROPOS. There shivered past a sigh
 At noon upon the air,
 As I cut short a young girl's fragile life ;
 Grim hunger made her die,
 For all the mute despair
 Of one who toiled to claim her for his wife.
- A VOICE. He was hanged yesternorn
 For stealing bread too late,
 And o'er his corpse forlorn
 They preached fine words of state.
- ANOTHER VOICE. From the broad pavement of yon city, worn
 By lust's continual traffic, comes a cry
 Of wailing, noon and night, that upward borne
 Curdles with horror the affrighted sky.
- ALL. It is the curse of bloated wealth,
 Ruin may alone bring health.
- CLOTHO. Speak, sisters, speak ! shall Cræsus live or perish
 Who with frail sceptre dares the wrath of Heaven ?
 Shall that vain king ambition longer cherish,
 Or seek in dust and mire to be forgiven ?
- LACHESIS. Let him drain the cup of Sorrow,
 To the sunshine bid sad morrow,
 Let the clouds of darkness roll
 O'er the ruins of his soul ;
 Pierce his heart with care's sharp fang
 Torn from breasts of humbler men—
 Wake him with destruction's clang ;
 Never let him rest again.

(Together.)

Let him, let him know the truth,
 We will leave him not alone,
 Till from tyranny to ruth
 Turn his regal heart of stone ;
 Teach him, teach him to be just,
 Let him learn a monarch's trust :
 O'er his bare head drag a pall,
 O'er his blanched head bowed in grief,
 Till the wretch on Death shall call,
 Sole cup-bearer of relief.

LACHESIS. A crownéd mortal hath the gods forgot,
 And in his pride the poor remembered not,
 Say, what shall be his doom ?

ATROPOS. Grief !

CLOTHO. Grief, and then the tomb.

ALL. Wear out body, torture mind,
 Till misfortune make him kind.

(Pause.)

CLOTHO. When in wrath against the world
 Lightnings of the gods seem hurled—

LACHESIS. When the Titan's fever shakes,
 Till the wan Earth sickening quakes—

ATROPOS. When the coursers of the Wind
 Rush past, snorting, unconfined,
 Æolus aghast afar
 Flung from out his whirling car—

ALL. Loftiest tree and tower to ground
 Sink in ruin most profound,
 Highest pinnacle and spire
 Reel first, fringed with lurid fire :
 Stature vain of mortal man
 Tempts not these, with added span ;
 King and peasant are the same
 Stripped, mid earthquake, gust and flame.

Not thus we, with mystic power,
Urge on Retribution's hour,
Shrouded viewless in the gloom,
Planning dark decrees of doom,
Weaving meshes to ensnare,
Driving onwards to despair,
Till the proudest at our beck
Staggers to the grave a wreck,
And with agonizing breath
Spreads his void embrace to Death.

[The scene closes.]

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

Scene 1. Night. A Garden in the precincts of the Palace, with a Terrace, Fountain, and Palm Trees. ARIENIS and LYDIS descend the Terrace steps.

LYDIS. O Arienis! why so pale and sad,
That wert so joyous, when the day was young—
This, thine own day—our happy innocent birth
Into a world of pleasures? Now, thou art
A fitting handmaid for slow, solemn Night,
To bear her dusky train, being no more
A smiling princess hand in hand with Morn,
Wedded to ever changeful, new delight.

ARIENIS. I cannot tell thee wherefore I am sad :
As a tired child, that, in a festive throng
Unused hath rioted in saucy play,
With little fevered, heavy eyelids sits
Disconsolate and fretful, so I feel
The pang of being sated.

LYDIS. Wherefore so ?
All hath been bright, and new and wonderful :
The palace gardens—our whole world before—
Seems but a desert, now that I have seen
The glories of the world without ; and thou—
Dost thou not feel the same ?

ARIENIS. My Lydis, no !
Yet I can scarce tell why, so novel seem
The strange ideas which haunt me.

LYDIS. Tell me all.

ARIENIS. 'Tis foolish fancy. Nay, I have not words.

LYDIS. Hast thou then found a shrine within thy breast
Too sacred for our friendship, linked through life

Till this eventful morn? Oh, then I will repent
That I have been so joyous, and have liked
This hateful, ill-conditioned, gloomy day,
Which teaches thee how far thou mayst love Lydis.

ARIENIS. Thou ever ardent prattler, stop awhile,
And I will shape unto thine eager ear
Mine idle story. Didst thou mark, this morn,
One who, amid the bravery of the throng,
Seemed like a stranger, lost and travel-worn?

LYDIS. I did, I did—a noble-looking youth
Of careless and free bearing. It was he
That gallantly fierce Gyges did chastise,
Who sought his life, for passing o'er the square
In place forbidden unto common men.
Thou dost remember him brought bound before
Thy father who delighted hailed in him
A kindred spirit, and so bade him to
The Court to-morrow? We shall see him, then.

ARIENIS. Thou art mistaken. I remember him
Of whom thou speakest: 'tis not he I meant.
Nay thou wilt smile at me?

LYDIS. No, dream with thee—
Add all my girlish fancies to thine own—
Think with thee, comfort thee, and, if need be,
Weep with thee—so thou wilt hide nought from her
Who loves thee as her soul.

ARIENIS. Well, then, 'tis this.
Come, walk with me, and I will tell thee all.
Among the crowd, I saw one pale, proud face,
In some absorbing and wild sorrow wrapt:
'Tis ever present to me since, and seems
To ask that I should share its melancholy.
Mine eyes have gazed into the empty air,
Till dizzy grown with picturing the look
Of that young mourner, and I feel myself

Looking like him, and then my heart doth beat
 With quick pulsation all unknown before.
 Oh ! something tells me from yon glittering stars,
 That, one by one, in silence, took their rank
 In heaven's blue maze above, since we came hither,
 My fate, whate'er it be, is written there
 Entwined with his ; and I would have it so.

LYDIS. 'Tis fascination of an evil eye.
 'Tis well the Magian's charm was on thy breast,
 In lambent flame of sacred virtue wrought,
 To guard thy bosom from such terrors—

ARIENIS. No !
 Methinks it is the sudden, sweet alarm
 Of wondrous sympathy, soul-knitting power !
 Born of a fleeting moment in the eyes,
 That purvey for the soul, and recognize
 The separate beamings of a kindred thought.

[ARIENIS retires to the back of the stage,
 and leans against a balustrade.

Enter THONIS.

LYDIS. Thonis, come hither, and my playmate chide
 For being dismal, without Love's behest
 To wear dim channels with cold, sullen tears
 In cheeks that softly bloom with shell-like hue.

THONIS. My laughing Lydis, and my beauteous one,
 Soon will the Love ye mock at drag you off,
 Poor trembling captives to his lion-drawn car.
 Lydis shall weep, and Arienis smile ;
 Such new emotion shall transplant your spirits.
 Will you within, and choose to-morrow's robes ?

LYDIS. I am quite ready.

THONIS. Thou lov'st dress like a wood-nymph garlanding
 Her hair all day with flowers.

LYDIS. And rightly too,
Lest she should scare rough Satyrs, or I men—
The mortal race of monsters.

THONIS. Dost thou mark
How sorrowful she stands, nor shows a sign
Of curious satisfaction at our talk?

LYDIS. Thou mightest as well deck Isis' stony bust
As my poor cousin. Yesternight, I passed
Through that far chamber where the face serene
Of the Egyptian Goddess sculptured stands :
Unearthly sentiment in marble, caught
From pale, ascetic priestess of old Nile,
Dreamy, and wild, and sweetly mystical :
And as I passed, pausing to look upon
The wondrous calmness of her face, I threw
The black gold-spangled veil, that thou knowest well,
Upon the statue's head, where it did fall
Like starry night pale lily curtaining :
I'll swear a pretty oath, thou wouldst have smiled
To see how like my cousin it did seem,
As she now does to it.

THOMAS. Truth! I like not
Our Arienis' stern disdain of dress,
And all the fancies of a girl's young heart.

LYDIS. She is too sensitive, too fanciful ;
And, like that flower—the garden's meek, blue eyes—
How call you them ?—doth bend too low its neck,
When but one shadow frowns where sunbeams smiled ;
So she doth stoop, ere well bright Joy has fled—
His sweetness lingering in the cold embrace
Of his pale elder sister, Melancholy.
She lives on omens, and creative Thought—
The slave of others—is her tyrant. See,
How deeply she doth sigh ! Go, speak to her.

THONIS. I will ; and if the lovely robes displayed

By the Phœnicians that came yesterday
Should move her not, then she is lost indeed.

Enter MELES.

MELES. Forgive the intrusion. What, the Princess, too?
Mourns she the holocaust of hearts she slew
This morn? Oh, no! that were no woman's trick;
For us they have no mercy. [*He salutes, and is going.*]

THONIS. Meles! stay.
Knowest thou a charm to win a woman's heart
To sprightly conversation, love of dress?

MELES (*aside*). Would that I knew the countercharm.
(*Aloud*) Hem! let her eat.
Drink, sleep, and be familiar with my wife.
Apollo's self could scarce prescribe a cure.
Where is the wondrous she?

THONIS (*points to ARIENIS.*) Behold her there.

MELES. Oh!
Have I offended?

THONIS. Nay! she heard you not.

MELES. Well, 'tis a case for the ambiguous verse,
When Croesus next consults the oracle.
I've seen a mother at a funeral
Twitch out a froward skirt, and then this done
Moan till it made one shudder. Widows, too—
But that's more natural—can still afford
To render sorrow comely. Possibly,
They think the ghost of him they slew still there,
And so would do him honour.

LYDIS. Hapless ghost!
Condemned to see thy widow mourning thee—

MELES. Pursued by fashions to the brink of Styx,
While she doth sigh and call him "dear good man,"
Vowing he was a Phœnix—so far true
She dates his virtues only from his ashes.

(MELES is gradually sliding off the stage, and is about to go.)

THONIS. Oh ! scandalous ! Stay, I will pardon thee
If thou wilt tell me where my Atys is.
Where is that truant husband, lover now
No more ; since he is crossed in sport and arms,
And is left all to me, whom thence he shuns ?

MELES. I left him leaning in his hunting kennel,
Girt by a full pack of rough, cold-nosed friends
Round him there gathered in mute circle all ;
One squatting on his haunch did gravely sit
Eyeing him wistfully ; another stood
With paws familiar on his master's thigh,
Who forthwith patted half a dozen heads,
And then a dozen tongues straight licked his hands,
Like struggling courtiers ; one anon would go,
Lap a few drops of water, then return
And wisely gaze again, as he would speak,
Whom the Prince thus addressed—"Thou askest me
To be thy comrade in the breezy field,
And give thee practice, lest thy sharp white fangs
Grow yellow, like a miser's, with much thought
Of gold, that doth him jaundice—knowest thou not
I am a king's son, therefore must not do
What my heart wills ; a prince, and therefore sad ?
But ye shall suffer not, my gallant hounds ;
To-morrow I will order you abroad,
And then a dog shall be more free than prince
Housed in a royal palace"—
Whereat the brute emphatic wags his tail,
And the Prince, sighing, thinks of a long course,
And straightway pats the hairy mob again.

THONIS. Thou makest me smile, although I should feel sad.

MELES. Nay, the Prince loves you well ; but he is sad,
Being confined, which is most natural.
A bird, unused to liberty, returned

Doth peck his cage for entrance ; so the Prince
Frets to be free. I must unto the King.

Ladies ! Salute the Princess well from me. [*Exit MELES.*]

ARIENIS (*coming forward.*) Did you not speak of dress and
rich attire ?

Come ! I would have a white robe rich and rare
Of purest, new device.

LYDIS. Why, that is well,

Forget these pensive thoughts.

THONIS. Soon Love shall fan

With purple wing thy soft eyes' sleeping fire ;
The Gods shall smile upon the prosperous suit
Of some young prince whom Cræsus wills his son,
Thy bridegroom. What great Cræsus wills is done.

(*THONIS and LYDIS go out.*)

ARIENIS. I follow you.

It may be so ; but Grief,

With vast form undefined, sits brooding nigh,
And seems to threaten I shall early perish :
I have heard such dark forebodings presage joy ;
Yet the sad knowledge first revealed to day
Of starving thousands make me feel as one
Who on the shore of human misery
Hath, child-like, pressed a sea-shell to her ear,
And trembled at its murmurs. Speak, ye winds !
Laden with unknown sighs ; thou moon ! and stars
Of pomp and sorrow equal witnesses ;
Why was I born to greatness, when in want
Whole myriads languish ? Could the offering
Of my poor life alleviate their ills,
O Night ! how welcome were the sacrifice !

[*She kneels down. The scene closes.*]

Scene 2. Midnight. A Square in Sardis. Statues of the Gods around.

Enter ADRASTUS.

ADRASTUS. Stained with a brother's blood, a fugitive,
Through the deserted, cold and shadowy streets
I wake accusing Echo, finding thus
A meeter welcome, than if cheerful throng
Did living patter o'er the sun-lit stones
With mid-day hum and busy merriment.
The God of hearths, Ephestian Jove, assist
My lagging steps and guide my weary path ;
He, sternest censor, knows my innocence.

(Pause.)

The city sleeps in silent beauty clad,
Not gentlier pictured infants' sweet repose
Touches the eyesight with mild roseate hues
And undulation soft, whom fancy strives
Vainly to clothe in age ; so cannot I
Invest in thought this panoramic dream,
Flooded with silent beauty, with the life,
The turmoil, stir and pomp of ant-hill day ;
And yet, to-morrow's dawn, of this fair night's
Death-like repose sure resurrection, comes,
And with it the stern need of action brisk,
Driving Adrastus, fated, onward—Whither ?
O Genius ! that, unseen by mortal eye,
Stoodst at my birth, prophetic visitant,
Did any beam of joy light on thy brow
The calm effulgence of a hope-born smile ?
Unfold the mystic roll that doth contain
My second page of life, with steadfast look
I will gaze on it : be it mine to tread
The crisp green velvet of Elysian lawns,
Or battle, choked, through lava wastes of grief.

Enter GLAUCUS.

GLAUCUS. Adrastus, have I found thee? Tell me how
I lost thee, whom so jealously I watch?

ADRASTUS. While thou didst gaze on the embattled host,
That myriad unit, slave to one command,
Moving in quick obedience to and fro,
And scanned the vast machine with curious eye,
And eager listened to the trumpet's clang,
I, lost in bitter memory, strayed away,
And missed thy friendly presence.

GLAUCUS. Oh, it was
A sight from sorrow's clutches and from self
To snatch the soul and bid one all forget:
Now on the crested manes of neighing steeds
My spirit rode exulting, as they swept
The undulating plain in time-beat shock;
Now fluttered mid the pennons; now was throned
In wild delirium on the extended shields,
Which flung the burnished sun his splendours back:
And then the monarch, with his shining mien,
How full content he stood, in truth a king.

ADRASTUS. How! Art thou turned king-worshipper?

GLAUCUS. Not so;
It was the man and not the king who won
My homage, ere we parted.

ADRASTUS. Spoke you, then?
Methought we had a different plan agreed.

GLAUCUS. Listen. While seeking thee I gazed about,
A sudden pause from clamour struck my sense,
And looking up I saw a stately man
Borne by, full nigh me, in a gorgeous car;
Then from the throats of countless thousands burst
A mighty shout of jubilee that shook
The earth, the air, and in my inmost soul

Vibrated. I, with travel dull, fatigued,
 Felt disinclined to jostle with the crowd,
 So sought to find an outlet. As it chanced,
 I crossed the square in some forbidden part—
 From every quarter shouts of "Stranger! Ho!
 Kill, kill the wretch" assailed my deafened ear—
 Then full upon me rode a spearman, whom
 A score or more quick followed; he at once,
 Poising his lengthy dart, struck at my life;
 Like lightning leapt in air my two-edged sword,
 And headless waved his weapon. Ere applause,
 As at some deed theatric, died away,
 I was dragged, bound, before the king.

ADRASTUS.

What said

Great Cræsus?

GLAUCUS. Little; a short while he eyed
 My stained, uncourtly dress, then thus did speak—
 "Knowest thou thy life is forfeit?" I replied
 Thus—"Mighty king! a foot or little more
 Of iron binding to yon tall spear's top,
 And I had Rhadamanthus answered now,
 Not Cræsus." A slight frown gave place
 Unto the glorious mantling of a smile,
 Winning as bright Apollo's minstrelsy.
 "Loose him," he said, and unto me "Young Greek,
 We will adopt thy hint, and soon shall save
 A harvest of spear-heads! Thy bearing free
 Doth please us; to our Court, to-morrow, come,
 We bid thee." I obeisance made, retired.

ADRASTUS. 'Tis well the King is such.

GLAUCUS.

Of this be sure,

Thou wilt be kindly met.

[Cries and sounds of mirth are heard.]

ADRASTUS.

Hark! whence those sounds?

GLAUCUS. It is a festal time among the soldiers,

And some their frontal wreaths have dipped too oft
In the red wine-cup.

ADRASTUS. On my ear the sounds
Jangling discordant seem to syllable
Such words as these, "He stabbed his gentle brother,
Adrastus, he, the murderer," and then
The mocking laughter of the Furies joins
In distant chorus.

GLAUCUS. Hadst thou loved him not
With deep affection, ere the accident,
Which drove thee, Prince, a suppliant shelterless,
To be, by ancient rite, received here,
And purified of thine unwitting deed,
Thou mightest feel some remorse ; but, as it is,
Thou must shake off this weakness.

(MELES approaches, singing.)

MELES. When Madam Helen's wanton charms
Deserted Menelaus' arms,
The stanch old Greek in wine did quench
The memory of that naughty wench ;
A Thracian cup he poured, and said,
My joy still lives, my grief is dead—

Dead, that is, drowned ; the keen remembrance obfuscated in
liquor. Ay, had he only stuck to that—

(Sings.)

Come, join me, friends, devoid of care,
'Tis well for friends in wine to share—

Mark, there, the philanthropy of social enjoyment ; no tickling
your own gullet with the oily gurgle of rich Cyprus, leaving
dry and husky the swallow of your poor friend Tantalus, who
doth sit tenderly on the extreme edge of the chair, and wipe his
lips, and do thee reverence from the storm-blown corner near
the door—

(*Sings again.*)

'Tis well for friends in wine to share—

Wine, not wives. No! even your philanthropist objects to other than drinking-horns—

(*Sings.*)

To Bacchus' reason had he kept,

Troy had for Hector never wept:

Nor many heroes' bodies lain

A prey to dogs on that dry plain—

Dry plain—Bah! All the sands of Egypt rise in my imagination. No oasis, not even the figure of a palm tree to deceive the burning eyes—not an amphora near thee; and but one empty cup, with a fly drowned the day before yesterday baked in the hot metal's bottom. (*Looking at the Statues.*) Methinks I see pink! Or is there any rosy current glowing within the polished limbs of yon marble aristocracy? Nay, rather I dispense my own warmth around me, and therein resemble the ardour of great men's adorers, who see a purple hue of generosity mantling in the frigid bosom of selfish pride on the faintest performance of the most compulsory charity. Let me look the skies in the face. Diana trips. The planets stagger. Would that the clouds were wine; then would I petition thee, O Jove, to make me an eccentric orb, that I might elbow intoxicated through space; sometimes merging into an opaque thundery mass, as it were a fifteen hours' debauch, and anon dipping behind a floating, rosy fleece, as it might be to quaff an occasional goblet. I should be but a hazy star. (*Staggers against GLAUCUS.*) Hilloh! another eccentric planet? Hast thou been taking in life and light anywhere, to fit thee to keep company with a jolly dog-star like me? Are thy cares embalmed? Is thy wife, she with the sick children at home, forgotten? Are thy debts dissolved, and thy conscience, that fearfully tweaketh thy other self, the sober churl, dipped in a cask of virtuous wine—that which thou didst immerse an extremely threadbare used-up conscience, coming up like the virgin score of a new game of the

bones? or, as the sun who goeth down into his wine cellars of a night very dirty and inflamed in the visage, doth in the morn respectably illumine the Eastern wave? Have at thee! If thou be'st a sober liar, thou shalt be damned in the truth, and if a simple man, thou shalt be a very pattern falsehood-monger. If thou didst ever say a good thing by accident, which thou wast too dull to comprehend, thou shalt now have the unravelling of it. Nay! thou shalt say a score or two more, and thy wit shall outstrip thy legs, as a needy fantastic gentleman skips nimbly away from a brace of unsightly duns—

(Sees ADRASTUS.)

Well, gentlemen, what say you to a cup?
 I'll rouse a brace of handmaids; we'll carouse
 E'en to mid-day to-morrow, give the health
 Of our great monarch, and in some rare glass
 Pledge our fair Princess, this day given first
 To the enraptured eyes of Sardis.

(Shouting is heard near.)

A VOICE.

Meles! Ho!

Where art thou, Meles?

ANOTHER VOICE.

Art thou sunk in earth

With Pluto to get drunk? Ho! Meles, Meles!

MELES. Silence! my new and most esteemed friends,
 And yet methinks you have said nothing yet:
 Those men, my late companions, have indulged
 You see, too freely, us to join to-night—
 What say you? Come!

GLAUCUS.

I think 'tis hardly right

Thus to desert your friends.

ADRASTUS.

Sir, your intent

Is ventured at a loss. We are but men
 Of sober mood; we thank you, so farewell.

(Enter two or three Lydians, who seize MELES in a disorderly way.)

FIRST LYDIAN. Meles! We thought to find thee clasping tight
 Some marble statue in good fellowship,
 Pressing yon piping Faun for thee to wake
 Droll, wanton echoes in the frightened square
 With a lewd jig of wondrous merriment ;
 Or on Diana's cold and virgin palm
 Forcing thy trophy wine-cup, or the god
 Of wine himself addressing, which, straightway
 Answering thyself, thou dost applaud for wit,
 Though thine own scurvy jesting.

SECOND LYDIAN. Is it fair
 To quit us—you who endless friendship vowed,
 But now, with fifty gay endearing terms,
 Telling us oft we were the kindest men
 With whom thou hadst e'er crushed a mellow cup
 In fellowship divine ?

MELES (*to the Lydians*). Friends, bear me off !
 Yon statues are less cold than churls like these.

SECOND LYDIAN (*to ADRASTUS and GLAUCUS*). I crave your
 pardon, come, see how at Sardis
 We are wont to wear the night out.

ADRASTUS. Thanks, good sir !
 Your offer we may not accept, being bound
 Awhile no roof to enter.

MELES (*aside*). How I hate
 Yon kill-joy stranger with his pallid brow ;
 He sobers me untimely, dulling fumes
 Of an eight hours' debauch with one sour look ;
 The sullen spinster morn, Aurora hight,
 Who brings me headaches, doth affect me less
 Than this same moral stranger. Sweet-faced sirs,
 A wakeful night to all. (*To ADRASTUS*.) Thou dismal fellow,
 May salt and water choke thee evermore.
 (*To his companions*.) My very drunken and bad style of friends,
 Wilt please you follow ?

[*Exit MELES, singing.*]

FIRST LYDIAN. Since you will not with us,
We wish you a good night. *Exeunt Lydians.*

ADRASTUS. Go, soulless crew !
Yet meant they well, and if the thing they boast
Wherewith the crawling ecstasy they love
Is gendered—if their wine in cups, in seas,
With its mean poison could entrance my woes,
I'd wreath my brow with garlands, shout aloud,
In giant frenzy stagger through the streets,
And not the pillared grandeur of yon arch
Should loose the jutting of my shoulder wide,
Or free the glorious rolling of my step,
Striding like jocund demigod ;
Nor Phœbus' early beams my senses cool,
Nor day, nor night a sobering influence bring—
So would I worship Bacchus.

GLAUCUS. He full oft
The cankerous thought inflames with redder spot,
When a great mind is prey to some deep pang,
As he doth numb the grief of trifling men,
Or frolic grace to dullest creature lend—
Thou markest me not.

ADRASTUS. Nay, seek repose, my friend,
Beneath the wanderer's roof, yon spangled sky,
While guardian of thy sleep I seek the star
Streaming perplexed with mine unhappy fate,
Like hollow-cheeked Egyptian with crooked signs
On Pharos' lonely isle, by deep morass,
Tracing each fiery visitant,
Or wise Chaldean wrapped in dusky robe,
Speck on the dim plain, with tall mitre seen,
And carved staff in motionless arrest,
Lost to the baying of the Indian hound
Circling in hungry quest, and hearing not
The funeral cries and lamentation loud,

As in red torch-light gleams the pungent corpse
 Borne near him, or the Armenian's chattering, bound
 With jingling asses back for venture new
 Of costly merchandise.

GLAUCUS. No ! sleep thou shalt,
 And sleeping share thy golden dreams with me,
 For which I'll give thee matter.

ADRASTUS. How, what more ?

GLAUCUS. Oh ! I have seen a maiden passing fair.

ADRASTUS. This folly is ill-timed.

GLAUCUS. Nay, shouldst thou chide
 Like one of those grave bearded men of Greece,
 Who preach unto our youth from formal porch
 Of masonry severe, yet will I tell thee.
 The night, the place, the mood attune my soul
 To picture her who rode by Cræsus' side.

ADRASTUS. His wife ?

GLAUCUS. No ! His wife's daughter—
Heard you not

The oily rascal Lydian rave of her ?
 Ay, such a form
 Endymion, in his longest, sweetest dream
 On Latmos' top, where honeysuckles waved
 Their spendthrift blossoms 'mid his tangled locks,
 While from each blade of turf and flower around
 Fast-glittering starry droplets ever winkt
 To the enamoured Queen of that witch'd hour,
 Smiling might scarce have imaged—Such a face
 Young Paris saw, and heaved a sobbing sigh
 As Heaven's resplendent Beauties knit their hands
 On Ida, and the wind to woo the rose
 Lipping foretold his judgment—Nay, her waist !
 Her slender throat ! her brow ! her liquid eyes
 In whose pure depths Love gazing lost his fires
 There hidden burning still ; her virgin mien

ADRASTUS. Thou hast warmed
My sad heart for a moment with thy tale.
GLAUCUS. And didst thou see her not?
ADRASTUS. I saw—
Dost thou remember when the city's walls
We left, where he lies motionless and cold—

GLAUCUS. And didst thou see her not?

I scarcely know.

Dost thou remember when the city's walls
We left, where he lies motionless and cold—

That laughter-loving, golden-haired sweet boy—
 Meeting a funeral train as we passed by,
 Flying on swift steeds through the gloom of night?

GLAUCUS. I do.

ADRASTUS. Well, then, I saw it not, or seemed
 As if I had not seen it, until now;
 Now I am haunted by each mourner's face
 Familiar as if known throughout my life
 With every gesture and small circumstance;
 The flutter of corpse cerements, and the play
 Of light and shadow on the ghastly dead,
 While passed the visionary torch-lit throng,
 Like black trees waving ere a night of storm
 With wizard stars bright-flickering through their branches—
 All this is present to my fevered sense,
 Displacing aught else. Canst thou wonder, then,
 If I have this thy vision overlooked?

GLAUCUS. Let mine then banish thy sad vision hence;
 Come, let us seek some star-roofed nook to slumber;
 To-morrow I will bring thee to the palace
 Where expiation, of great Croesus sought,
 Shall herald thy new dawn of happiness.

[Exeunt slowly. The scene closes.]

Scene 3. The Fates, CLOTHO, LACHESIS and ATROPOS, sitting in the clouds. Night view of Sardis, as before.

CLOTHO. He hath not changed?

LACHESIS. No!

His folly still doth grow.

ATROPOS. He may not now amend,
 Ere doth begin the end.

CLOTHO. There is a time for mortals to repent
 And to the doomed are awful omens sent,
 But kings and peoples warnings seldom heed
 Themselves co-workers of the avenging deed :
 All ranks are blind, to truth and honour lost,
 Eager for news, vain-babbling, faction-tost ;
 The noble from his birth a chartered knave,
 The trader to his tomb a crawling slave ;
 Torrents of words, lie-symbols, sense beguile ;
 Deep skill in ruin snares with flattering wile ;
 Wisdom to knowledge instinct yields to art,
 As the brain softens, hardens still the heart.

A VOICE. As Cræsus rode forth in his pomp to-day,
 Straight in the path a starved gaunt corpse there lay ;
 His coursers reared ; loud thunder o'er him rolled,
 The monarch's brow grew dark and proudly cold.
 " Chain yon foul carrion to the wretch," he said ;
 " Through whose neglect offends our sight the dead ! "

CLOTHO. Let him the measure of his guilt thus fill ;
 The cup o'er-brims, the fatal drop we spill.

THE FATES (*together*). Thrice the goblet we inverse—
 Now begins to work the curse ;
 See ! Starvation's skull we hold,
 Lined it is with yellow gold,
 Jewels rare it hath for eyes,
 Each a pillaged kingdom's prize :
 This to thee, and this to thee !
 Sisters, pledge in awful glee—
 Behold ! our ministers appear.

The Furies, ALECTO, TISIPHONE and MEGÆRA, rise from beneath.

THE FURIES. We heard your summons and are here.

CLOTHO. Come ye in anger, grief, or fear ?

THE FURIES (*holding up their right arms*). In all ! In all !

- ALECTO. Near Phlegethon's red stream
 Whose ripples are like spasms of dying faces,
 Lit by its burning gleam,
 A traitor's Shade fled nimbly our embraces ;
 As the chase onward swept
 And round we circling flew,
 The licking flames up-leapt
 With tongues of arrowy blue ;
 The spectral quarry bounding
 O'er fiery fissures still
 That hell-hunt hears resounding—
 We rise unto your will.
- TISIPHONE. Weird sisters ! haste, declare
 What doom ye now prepare ;
 Nor jagged shard, nor aspic's coil,
 Nor molten founts that blistering boil,
 Nor keen Remembrance' venom'd sting
 More sharp than hook of vampire's wing
 Shall fail to work at your behest :
 Name him—then leave to us the rest.
- MEGÆRA. Queens of Destiny ! behold
 These knotted snakes in slimy fold ;
 The reptiles lulled by power divine
 Pay homage to your charmed eyne.
- CLOTHO. By Cœlus' poisonous gore
 From which with scorpion lash and torch ye
 sprung—
- LACHESIS. By Saturn, Dis, and Jove,
 Whom shuddering Rhea bore—
- ATROPOS. By the first parricide self-hung
 In thunder-blasted grove ;
 A deed unknown before—
- THE FATES (*together.*) By pangs of guilty love—
 Thoughts that unspoken wither—
 Bring your dread sister hither ;

Call Nemesis !

THE FURIES. Come, sister, come!
 In black and bloody dress,
 With Conscience' horrors laden,
 Like pictured Sleeplessness,
 Rise, pale and fearful maiden !

NEMESIS *rises in the form of a beautiful woman.*

NEMESIS. Why call ye me, dear sisters, in your mirth ?
 Hell is entranced till I return again ;
 Grim Cerberus nods, while Pity finds new birth
 In Pluto witched by sad Proserpine's pain :
 She crowns him with white daffodils, whose beams
 Circle his ebon brow with pearly light,
 Her alabaster fingers shed soft gleams
 Like pale stars falling from the robe of Night :
 What would you ? Speak ! For I must haste away
 Ere Hades change to realms of joyous day.
 Speak, sisters, speak !

THE FATES & FURIES (*together*). Vengeance on Cræsus wreak.

NEMESIS. What hath a silly mortal done,
 That I for him should quit my charge,
 Leave work in Hades new begun,
 Or victims tortureless at large ?

ATROPOS. His state doth mock high Heaven.

NEMESIS. 'Tis a crime,
 Like the poor players', who ape earthly kings ;
 Shall the Immortals to relentless Time
 In chace of folly furnish swifter wings ?
 Ye need me not.

LACHESIS. 'Tis not for this alone,
 That our stern mandate winged by Thought hath flown
 Where Styx with nine-fold coil encircles Hell,
 To summon thee with vengeance' awful spell.

NEMESIS. Speak, then, what is it ?

CLOTHO. The cold, selfish sway

Of crowned Injustice—fierce neglect of woe ;
 Pride, avarice, pomp, unwarmed by Mercy's ray ;
 Nations o'erworked in hopeless labour's throe ;
 Insatiate wars in mock religion's name,
 To mask the ruthless spoiler's greedy shame.

NEMESIS. My sister Furies strain unto your beck.

ATROPOS. Thy pall of doom must shroud his human wreck.

NEMESIS. Have, then, your will !

CHORUS. Through moaning catacombs a voice
 O'er mortal sufferings bids rejoice ;
 Hell's burning waves with sullen roar
 Drown his lost peace for evermore.

Hist ! hist ! be still—

A mightier pow'r shall now rehearse
 The darkening terrors of his curse.

NEMESIS. Gather Horror, Doubt and Dread
 In the chambers of his head ;
 In his swelled and bursting heart
 Conscience ! lose thy venom'd dart ;
 Let him toss upon his pillow
 Like a corpse tossed on a billow ;
 Let him, waking, start to find
 Sleep of terror still more kind
 Than the ceaseless thrill of pain
 Thought drives through his wildering brain ;
 Curdle blood, and bristle hair,
 Quivering eye-ball dimly stare ;
 Reel beneath his step the ground,
 Mocking sights his sense confound,
 Cheating sounds affright his ear,
 Till his blanched soul crouch for fear
 In a corner of the thing
 Grovelling mortals hail as king ;

Till too late he doth confess
 All his state mere nothingness—
 Thus I name the punishment,
 On his mad presumption sent ;
 Now I leave the rest to you,
 Other work have I to do.

[NEMESIS *descends*. Then the FATES
vanish. Apparitions arise.

CHORUS. Rise Grief and Care !
 Seize on your prey—
 Lurid Despair !
 Hurry away—
 Ghastly Shapes throng
 Quick round his throne !
 Mingle among—
 He is your own.

VOICES. We obey !

Here is a sting,
 And here its brother ;
 On noiseless wing
 We chase each other :
 A guest unbidden,
 For every guest,
 From their sight hidden
 Join pomp and feast :
 We'll mop and mow,
 And imitate
 With antic bow
 Their human state.

(*Song.*)

Ofttimes, like shapes in clouds,
 In conclave wild we sit,
 Our council-robcs are shrouds
 By spectral moonbeams lit :

Sometimes on gable end
 Of house-top tall we group,
 Like shivering trees that bend
 At noise of screech-owls' whoop :
 Anon in mortal throng,
 Unseen we curtsey round,
 We nod to jest and song,
 Then dance to music's sound.

A VOICE. Form of Harpy, where away ?

ANSWER. Hence to wreak on sons of clay
 The evil they have done.

CHORUS. Not on rulers be alone
 The curse they have begun—
 All must suffer, all as one ;
 The people who endure
 Must pay blind folly's cost ;
 There is no Heaven-born cure
 For sense of justice lost :
 Who is free from blood-guilt ? None !
 All alike have ruin won.

A VOICE. Look, sister, look !
 What dost thou see ?

[The clouds open and disclose Apparitions.]

ANSWER. An aged king bent
 In agony—
 A vision drear
 Of hunters pale,
 A leafy bier
 Their burden frail.

ANOTHER VOICE. Hark, brother, hark !
 What dost thou hear ?

*[Cries and lamentations heard. Apparitions
 of armed men pass in pursuit of a flying
 multitude. A burning City seen in the
 distance.]*

The rushing sound
 Of foemen near :
 An Empire's tomb
 With charnel breath
 Infects the gloom
 And whispers—death !

Song, in mid-air.

Haste, now I fly
 Darkening the sky
 Whose thrilling azure ne'er on him shall beam
 Softly again ;
 But touch with pain
 His eyeballs quivering with distraction's gleam.

CHORUS. Vampire ! like maiden fair,
 With lip of crimson stain ;
 Lemur ! whose sudden glare
 Turns the lone wayfarer's brain ;
 Witch ! whose bright eye hath power
 Outglittering that of snake
 Coiled in a thunder-shower,
 'Neath fern of tangled brake ;
 Demon ! whose glance of fire
 Lures lovers to their doom,
 In beauty's frail attire
 Filched from a new-made tomb—
 Beings unholy all !
 The nameless host of wrong,
 Troop hither, great and small,
 And swell the shrieking throng.

(Song.)

Hark to a voice o'er far Cocytus wailing !
 It brings sad greeting from a race of kings
 Unto the last one. On thin air-beams sailing
 Unseen a terror o'er glad hearts it flings :

Away, away it dies—
 Away ! The shaft is sped ;
 The shadowy pageant flies—
 We mingle with the dead

CHORUS (*gradually becoming distant*).

Now, dissolving in the air,
 Shapes of evil, speed away !
 Spirits ! seek your deepest lair,
 Warned by breath of twilight gray ;
 Cloud-thrones of our council dark !
 Drift o'er forest, sea and plain—
 Hark ! the distant watchdog's bark,
 Spell-bound nature breathes again.

[*As the last Phantoms vanish, the clouds
 rise slowly and disappear. Distant
 view of Sardis, in early dawn. The
 Scene closes.*

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

Scene 1. An Ante-Chamber of the Palace. CRÆSUS, and then
SOOTHSAYER.

CRÆSUS. I had a sickly dream not long ago,
 That, flying in the morn, did somehow leave
 Its ashen hue to the blue vault of Heaven.
 'Tis nought ; and yet my inmost soul is dark
 With midnight gloom by lightning flashes lit
 Glimpsing wild shapes of horror : then, methinks
 A voice cries, " Look unto the end, vain man !
 What said the aged stranger ? " Curse the day
 Solon first bade me think, and so divorce
 My being from the circumstance around.
 Hold ! I am a king ;
 Such as, within the scrollèd list of Fame,
 In golden characters hath writ himself
 The first of mortals and the last of gods ;
 And being so, shall I fall from myself
 By small device of juggling demon shaken,
 Whilst all is firm around ? Come, aid me now,
 Thou swelling triumph of a kingly breast,
 That bade me smile, when shook the trembling ground,
 And thousand thousands passing called me lord,
 Sole glittered in my favour—at my beck
 Alone had being, life ; but what avails
 The frenzy of their burnished arms, their shouts,
 If I must lose my Atys ? What avails
 Celestial music ringing in mine ear
 With martial clang, or sweetest Memnon's airs,
 If in my bosom lives a brooding fear,

Or in my heart a sorrow? Off! I say,
 Thou strange, desponding doubt; for Atys lives,
 Shall live, he cannot die! Ye lying dreams,
 I do defy you—Cræsus laughs at you—
 Go, visit poor men's couches, frighten slaves!
 (*To Attendants.*) Send hither him from Delphos late returned,
 The agéd Soothsayer.

OFFICER.

Sire! he waits without.

Enter SOOTHSAYER.

CRÆSUS. Speak! fear not; say, what do the gods advise?

SOOTHSAYER. The oracle is come! With hideous shriek,
 "Why sends great Cræsus?" cried the Pythoness;
 "Is he not greater than a god, who sends?"

CRÆSUS. Wretch, mock me not!—Thou diest, I tell thee, ere
 Thy life's dull current to thy trembling heart
 Quick rushing can strike thrice with sick'ning throb,
 If thou dost play with Cræsus. Speak again!
 What said Apollo?

SOOTHSAYER. Mighty king, thus ran
 The oracle propitious, not deceiving—

(*Reads.*)

I know the shapeless ones that stream
 From the cave of Sleep, each dream
 That visits mortals—Monarch! thine
 Told his message at my shrine—
 No enemy doth threat the life
 Of thy son in rage or strife—
 When the dumb one speaks, beware!
 For a life of woe prepare—

CRÆSUS. Enough, thou fond, officious messenger!
 I am content—be silent—say no more.

[*The SOOTHSAYER retires to the back of the scene.*]

What said he? "When the dumb one speaks, beware!"

Why then 'tis well: if that I wait until

That hapless boy should give expression to

The unknown thoughts that wither in his soul

I may defy thee, Fate! "No enemy

Doth threaten Atys' life"—again 'tis well;

Perish the thoughts that did unking me. Stay,

(*To the SOOTHSAYER.*) Hast thou the sacrificial victims slain?

SOOTHSAYER. The reeking entrails give no certain sign.

CRÆSUS. If they said nought, why then all should be well.

Thou knowest not thy trade; canst thou not find

A happy augury when kings do ask

Assurance, and the gods have presaged well?

SOOTHSAYER. Hearken, O King!

CRÆSUS. Cease, if thou lov'st thy life!

(*To the Attendants.*) Give him his weight in gold, that men
may know

He hath served Cræsus. (*To the SOOTHSAYER.*) Go, be rich and
joyous. [*Exit SOOTHSAYER.*]

CRÆSUS (*alone*). A pyramid of thought doth fade in air

That in its chambers of dark grisly fear

Kept my soul prisoned, as the Egyptian kings

Centered in thick, oblivious marble lie

In silent fellowship of horrid Death

A night-mare sleep of ages! Once again

The air is clear: no blood-mist dims my sight,

Making me heart-sick 'mid triumphal show,

Nor phantom fingers pluck my joys away,

Stabbing my gentle Atys—Yet 'tis well,

He keeps his promise not to quit my side,

Lest, with the wanton daring of his age,

He tempt the doom which Heaven would fain deny.

[*Exit. Scene closes.*]

Scene 2. A Court leading to the Palace. SOOTHSAYER, then ARDEKNES, with SLAVE.

SOOTHSAYER (*alone*). He would not hear the warning ; dazzled
me

With the fierce blaze of his intemperate words.
Oh, impotence of power ! magnificence !
That proudly o'er the world would stalk, unchecked
By that which bids kings grin beneath their crowns,
Being Fate's jesters, whereat smile the gods,
When they have need of sport. Now, 'twere well done
To egg thee on, thou mighty fool ! to rue
Thy cruel, wanton, gorgeous insolence ;
But the spare habit, solitude and thought
Of this my message-life between the earth
And the unseen pow'rs above, lend me their aid
To disregard these chafings, pity them,
Not fiercely wish to punish. Heaven stays
Its grievous thunderbolts ; nor would I point
To the devoted head where they must fall :
Interpreter of evil, not its judge,
Such be mine office. Let me find some means
To warn the King lest his son perish soon,
As it is sadly written. I must wend
Back to my solemn post, where listeners thrill
To the strange tortured words that whispering wind
With sudden bursts of light from midnight cell
To pale-eyed prophet sitting motionless ;
While the vexed Pythoness doth foam within
Upon the ghastly pavement.—Who comes hither ?
Jove grant 'tis one that may the King forewarn.

Enter ARDEKNES and a SLAVE.

ARDEKNES. So ! he said thus ?

SLAVE.

He did, most mighty lord.

ARDEKNES. Curse on the base-born hound ! I'll make him
rue,

That he spoke ill of me. I seek mine own,
And he rebels. Thou say'st his wife is ill.

SLAVE. Dead, my lord—

ARDEKNES. Hem ! 'tis pity she is dead ;
Since 'tis a blessing to such beggared wretch—
Let me reflect—

SOOTHSAYER (*aside*). How that which in the King
Shone beaming, like an impious brilliant, seen
Upon the broad brow of a Titan, shows
With twinkling meanness of false trumpery beads
On this weak, petty, purse-proud miscreant !

ARDEKNES (*to the SLAVE*). Go, tell him quick to leave the
shed he rents ;

I need the ground to build my kennel on.

SLAVE. Alas ! my lord, his wife is yet unburied.

ARDEKNES. I'll have thee whipt—what's that to thee, thou
slave ?

If twenty wives lay cumbering the ground,
I need it for my kennel—Turn him out !
The air is good for fevers—I have thought
Some of the royal hounds to purchase, now
The Prince doth hunt no more.

SLAVE (*aside*). I will not go—

(*Aloud.*) My lord, 'tis done— (*Aside.*) I'll forth into the woods,
And couch with beasts, lodge me with starvèd wolves—
They do not gnaw their kind without some need,
When hunger racks their entrails—

ARDEKNES. Wretch ! begone—

SOOTHSAYER. Sir ! will it please you listen ?

ARDEKNES. Fellow ! haste,

If thou hast aught to say, for I am bid
Unto the palace festival : I am
A personage of high influence at Court.

SOOTHSAYER. Hence do I seek thine aid, most noble sir.
 Convey this scroll unto the King, and say
 Apollo called his faithful minister,
 Who dared not tarry longer. Hold ! it is
 A thing of moment, which affects the life
 Of the Prince Atys—thou wilt be rewarded
 With some rich gift. (*Aside.*) Thus will I make it sure ;
 'Twere of scant use to bid him pledge his word.
 (*To ARDEKNES.*) A thousand thanks, right noble sir ; be sure
 The King will be most generous—Farewell.

[*Exit* SOOTHSAYER, *after giving*
the Scroll to ARDEKNES.

ARDEKNES. The life of Atys?—of that pretty Prince,
 That courteous, sweet, agreeable young Prince,
 Who gently thought they were too hard on me
 The other morn, when we stood talking there,
 And cursed Orætes slandered me—His life ?
 And in my hands ? I am no murderer
 If I do let him die. Must I be boy
 To fusty soothsayers, and breathless run,
 Lest this same delicate Prince should sneeze too loud
 And burst a blood-vessel ? Nay, let him die ;
 Better than he have paid the bond of doom,
 Or else we were o'erstocked with virtuous folk,
 Leaving no room i' the world for common men
 That feel and curse and hate, as I do him.
 Come ! let me read this scroll, which then I'll tear
 And swallow. With his son's life so entombed
 The King's feast shall I grace with appetite.

(*Reads muttering.*)

“ I know the shapeless ones that stream—
 No enemy doth threat the life ”—

Ha ! what is this
 That ends the doggrel message of the gods ?

(*Reads.*)

“Let no suppliant near thee stand
Cresus ! drive him from thy land ;
Thine Atys struck by Phrygian spear
Where hunters meet, be this thy fear ! ”

What suppliant this ? I have it. 'Tis the Greek !
No ! his pale friend, I saw go in to-day ;
He is a Phrygian. By his hand then dies,
So saith Apollo, this same sweet young Prince,
If I should speak not.—Wilt thou speak, Ardeknes ?
Cursed be thy tongue, if it betray a heart
Where living hatred burns ! He pitied me,
When grim Orætes loosed his ribald jests—
I'll pity him with funeral grimace.

[*Tearing the paper with his teeth.*]

Would all their names were here that I might tear
And rage and bite and smile thus—thus—and thus !
Said he reward ? 'tis here—I grasp it rich
More than a king can give, though he be Cresus—
Vengeance on pitying and sweet-spoken Prince. [Exit.

Scene 3. The same.

Enter Sadyattes and a Gentleman, meeting.

GENTLEMAN. Good morrow ! art thou to the palace ?

SADYATTES.

No !

I like not crowds or sights where I am nought ;
Being so much, that I can feel the want
Of being something more.

GENTLEMAN.

'Twill be a sight

Well worth. The King, with Prince Adrastus, son

Of neighbouring Phrygia's king, wilt straight proceed,
 After some solemn ceremony done,
 Unto Apollo's temple.

SADYATTES. This prince slew
 His brother by some accident – pray tell me how
 It chanced ?

GENTLEMAN. Indeed I know no more than you.
 He seems much grieved. The King received him well.
 Is there aught heard from Delphos ?

SADYATTES. One hour since
 I saw the Soothsayer, who late arrived
 Hot from the oracle : he seemed in haste
 To quit the city. When I asked him of
 The Prince, he said that I should hear anon
 More than he then could tell me.

GENTLEMAN. Well, I trust
 Our Atys will be freed from the forced vow
 That doth so gall him. If you will not come
 I'll say good-morrow, for I fain would see
 The grand show that will doubtless follow on
 The expiation of the Phrygian prince.

SADYATTES. O man ! how art thou fooled by man who aches,
 And coughs and hopes and dreams, e'en as thyself,
 To run thus eagerly to stare and see
 How he can strut in gewgaw impotence
 And idle show beneath the modest sun
 That ever beams the same, or hides himself
 In stern magnificence of cloudy robe
 And red with Heaven's blushes. Man, proud man,
 Too apt forgets how much a crownéd skull
 Blanched by the winds is like unto the rest ;
 Nor checks the worm that stirs it, with a frown
 More sudden than its rayless brotherhood ;
 Smooth as a slave's, and as a cobbler's round—
 Your monarch's molars oftner wanting found.

[Exit.

Scene 4. A splendid Hall, decked with the Trophies of the Chase. Fire burning on the hearth. In the background are CRÆSUS, ADRASTUS, GLAUCUS, ORÆTES, MELES, ARIENIS, THONIS, LYDIS, ATYS, PRIESTS, CHORUS. An Altar, on which incense is burning. Near the hearth ADRASTUS sits covered by a white mantle spotted with blood; a dagger is stuck in the ground, a little distance from him. The FURIES appear towards the close of the scene.

(Strophe.)

We have waved the fingers green
Torn from lofty cedar's arm ;
With saffron boughs and juniper
The dark air winnowéd,
Whose red motes flicker warm
Seen as in crimson shambles ;
And the sheep hath rained his blood
Mixed with honey sweet and wine,
For that which hath been spilt
Unwittingly.

(Antistrophe.)

Daughters of Night and Acheron !
Fly hence to Pluto's throne :
There take your fearful stand—
Away !
Where copper twilight gleams
O'er faces of despair :
Over him ye late pursued
Ye have no power—
He is rescued, cheerful stands
A child of smiling day—
He is here !

(*Antistrophe.*)

Where the triple watch-dog glares,
Where shrill screams are sudden heard
With hollow notes of woe—
Hell's orchestral frenzy;
Whose sharp treble screeching high
Is like old age in lewdness,
The bass is growling blasphemy—
Mingling terrific—
Where nor sun nor moon doth shine,
But livid flames fast tremble
Fitfully with aspen tongues
Night to horror changing—
Thither haste!

Darkly with closed vampire wings,
 Let each snake-tressed beldam stand
 Around the throne of Dis,
 Craning low her furrowed neck
 To some new unholy bidding ;
 Weave ye there a fiercer spell ;
 Him ye seek ye cannot have—
 He is ours !

(Double Chorus.)

I.

He is ours ! he is ours !
 Sisters three, beguiled ye are :
 Though Fate's tempest o'er him lowers,
 Calmly beams in joy his star.

II.

Hell's wide gates may not receive him,
 Earth shall bear him on her breast ;
 Power ye have none to grieve him,
 Mar his pleasure, spoil his rest.

III.

But one charm had strength to save him,
 Since a brother's blood he spilt,
 Vainly myriad seas should lave him,
 Had his thoughts the stain of guilt.

(Answering Chorus behind the Scenes.)

Mortals ! half ye dream is true—
 Half to us and half to you ;
 He is purged of horror done,
 Worse remains by us begun ;
 Dusky fingers in the gloom
 Ceaseless ply the fatal loom,

And the awful shuttle groans
 With the sound of human moans :
 Lo ! 'tis worked with crimson thread
 In the chambers of the dead—
 Thus and thus we celebrate
 All your mortal pomp and state.

*[ADRASTUS flings the robe off, and
 seizing the dagger with a look of
 horror, throws it with force from
 the open window. He then comes
 forward slowly with the KING.]*

CRÆSUS. Son of my friends, I bid thee welcome here !

ALL. Welcome !

CRÆSUS. Dismiss thy grief, a father see in us ;
 The Furies are appeased, thy soul is clear :
 Fate willed the blow ; and had he sudden died,
 Struck by the blazing sun upon his head,
 Thou wert as guilty—

ARIENIS. Sir ! no longer mourn,
 My father tells you not—and I pray too—

ADRASTUS. Methinks from break of lilac-tinged cloud
 A voice celestial warms my listening blood—
 Am I then free from guilt ? Oh ! could I fling
 The thought of it away, as I have flung
 Yon weapon in the shrinking air, a gift
 Of horror to the rusting elements—
 Forgive this weakness, sire ! It were not well
 To be transported with too sudden joy,
 Though Peace stands smiling by—Behold her there !

[Looks towards ARIENIS.]

MELES (*aside*). Now will he love her, being grieved, and she
 Being a woman will love him.

CRÆSUS.

See, here, one

[Takes ARIENIS by the hand.]

Will bear thee company in sighing ; 'tis

Her nature ; yet I love her more than those
Whose smiles, like winter sunshine, mock the heart.

MELES (*aside*). Oh, she will love him, treasure that, fond King !
Let but a thief be pale, look sad and sigh,
And girls do immolate themselves : while worth
Walks past unnoticed, save by women grown
Worldly, and, therefore, worthless, though more wise.

CRÆSUS. Now that the melancholy rite is o'er,
Our merry-hearted Lydis shall beguile
Thy sad heart with untutored prattle wild,
And with her lute draw sorrow from thine eyes—
But first, to chase all gloomy thoughts away,
Sound softest flutes, and let the gauze-clad troop
Of dancers from Apollo's neighbouring shrine
Speed hither !

(*A Dance.*)

[*The Attendants present a goblet to CRÆSUS,
who pledges ADRASTUS and then gives it to
him.*]

To thy fortunes, noble prince !
Hereafter be they linked with those of Cræsus.

[*As they drink the FURIES rise and mock them.
The Dancers cry "Honour to the happy,
god-like CRÆSUS." ADRASTUS starts back
with horror, and covers his eyes with his
hands.*]

ADRASTUS (*recovering*). Methought the scent of blood was in
the air
And dreadful shapes did mock and gibber round ;
The earth seemed honeycombed with graves—'Tis firm
Beneath the dancers' feet. There stands the King,
And there his beauteous daughter shrined in light.

Out ! fevered fancies, visions of remorse,
I banish you for ever from my brain.

CRÆSUS (*to GLAUCUS*). Come, my brave Greek, unto our
armoury now ;

We need thy counsel, and may find, perchance,
A polished suit to fit thee—Ha ! we have
Men of as lithe a build as thou canst boast.

LYDIS (*to THONIS, apart*). Venus forbid the King should him
encase

In cold and cruel steel, whom I would slay
Defenceless, on the spot, with Cupid's shaft.

THONIS. Soldiers are most defenceless thus arrayed.
Cupid found Mars, 'tis said, in flashing steel,
With triple towering crest and rainbow scarf,
Striding conceited by deep pine-fringed lake
Whose dimpling wavelets trembled whilst he looked
Approval on his image—and then twanged
His baby bow the godling at tall Mars
All armed for slaughter, who therewith did chase
Through wilderness of flowers his urchin foe ;
And shield and lance and helm were thrown aside
As he did follow thus Love triumphing.

CRÆSUS. Go, search for Atys, bid him hither come,
(*To ADRASTUS*.) For thou must know our son; our darling
Prince,

Joy of our heart—we would ye should be friends.

ADRASTUS. O King ! his age will shun my humour sad,
As one from wreath-decked porch on festal day
Forth issuing trim and joyous starts aside
Chancing to rush against a funeral.
But I will seek to learn some cheerfulness
Enticing his young heart to know me well.

CRÆSUS. If thou wouldst do us service, seek to gain
A kindly influence o'er him, leading him
To study of dominions, craft of thrones,

To thoughts of empire and the sway of men ;
 To learned scrolls, and meditation wise
 That in itself doth round its happiness—
 The nobler pleasures of a manly mind
 Which thou hast studied well, if fame be true ;
 For steel doth threat the young life of our son
 And arms become him not in our fond eyes ;
 Fain would we wean him from the stirring field
 To precious commune with tranquillity,
 And thou mayst aid us. See ! 'tis he now comes.

Enter ATYS.

ATYS. Father, behold me here ! wilt thou forgive
 If Atys moodily did bear the chains
 Which thy love forged ?

CRESUS. Come hither, my dear son !
 Welcome this gallant stranger, whom dark clouds
 Shut from his royal birth-place. Ye are like
 In all, save fortune, that on us doth shine
 With prosperous content.

ATYS. Sir, let me grasp
 Your hand : we will be brothers.

ADRASTUS (*turning and hiding his face*). Brothers ? No !

ATYS. What means that groan, that start ? Dost thou refuse
 My hand ? I meant not to be forward, prince.

ADRASTUS. And wilt thou be my brother ? Pardon me,
 At moments I am not myself. Thanks, thanks,
 Think not Adrastus cold— (*Turns to GLAUCUS.*) Seest thou this
 friend ?

He like a palm-tree might have flourished,
 But rather chose to meet the adverse storm
 Than let Adrastus, blighted, sink alone—
 Now canst thou think this heart is cold to words
 Such as thy manly lips have just now said ?

(To CRÆSUS.) O Monarch ! thou art blest with jewels rare
 More than thy treasury may boast, though all
 Pactolus' sands were fused in yellow mass
 And heaped within its chambers.

CRÆSUS. Be ye three
 So linked together, ever friends as now.

[*Exeunt all but CRÆSUS.*]

O Happiness !

The Athenian lied that gave thee not to Cræsus.

[*The Dance continues a short time. Scene closes.*]

Scene 5. A Room in the Palace. ARIENIS, LYDIS, ADRASTUS,
 MUSICIANS, and Attendants.

ARIENIS. How rapt he stands, as if the gentle Shade
 Of him late slain did tarry whispering
 That smiles become him not. (To ADRASTUS.) Sir ! will you hear
 A song that pleased me well ?

ADRASTUS. Oh ! let me hear,
 I pray, that song again.

ARIENIS. Nay, there was none.

ADRASTUS. The music of thy voice ; I'd hear nought else !
 Oh ! speak again, until I listening grow
 To marble, and thy voice within me rings,
 Each silver syllable imprisoned here,
 Making another Memnon.

ARIENIS. Will you listen ?

LYDIS. Bid the musician that we last did hear
 Enter. It is a song of love he sings ;
 A foolish thing that always makes me smile.

ARIENIS. And weep when it is o'er, that 'tis not true.

LYDIS. Nay, smiles are mine, weeping I leave to you.

(*Song.*)

By old Pactolus' river,
Whose magic waves of gold
To where warm poppies quiver
Ceaseless their treasures rolled
In brightest mid-day beam
A sleeping maid did dream
Her heart was wintry cold !
Aha ! Let's mock thee, Gold !
With thy fantastic lure
Thou hast no charm to cure
Sad hearts that are a-cold—
False love may be forgot,
But true love knows thee not—
Knows thee not !

ARIENIS. Hast thou a sister ?

ADRASTUS. None.

ARIENIS. Nor cousin like

Our Lydis here ?

ADRASTUS. Not one.

ARIENIS Whom hast thou, then,

In Phrygia left to mourn for thee, as I
Should weep for Atys, were he banished hence ?
Speak ! I would hear thy story, pity her,
As there is doubtless one more than the rest
Tortured by thy sad absence —Tell me all,
Thy gentle frankness shall be paid with sighs
And deep emotion's kindest sympathy.

ADRASTUS. Lady, Adrastus is alone on earth ;
One friend alone, whom thou didst lately see,
Taught him to live and bear his wayward fate,

LYDIS. The noble Greek—It was well done of him.

ARIENIS. Hast thou ne'er loved ?

ADRASTUS. Methought indeed I had,
But sorrow woke me from so false a dream.

ARIENIS. Your love was false ?

ADRASTUS. Nay, she had not the heart
E'en to be false : beauteous, her beauty sprang
From that cold egotism blooming fresh
'Mid the bereavements of a Niobe :
She was propriety's fair bodying ;
And when misfortune frowned upon her love
It sickened like a rootless weed and died.

ARIENIS. Alas ! it should have grown through winds and
storms
And cruel lopping of the steel, a tree,
Where a true heart might shelter glad and warm
Through all the ravings of adversity—
Or rather as a meek and clinging plant,
That hath enlaced an oak in summer-time,
Should, in the season of his trouble, when
The bolt of Heaven had struck him to the heart,
With tenderest aid clasp and sustain him still.

Song.

By Caucasus' far mountain
Snow pillowing on snows,
Where freezes steel-clear fountain,
And black nights sudden close,
A youth dreams in soft trance
Bright glad eyes on him glance
While his warm bosom glows !
Aha ! Care boasts no spell
To numb with icy touch,
And envious fingers' clutch
Warm hearts a-loving well—

Care ! thou mayst wintry rave,
 Since Love is not thy slave—
 Not thy slave !

[ARIENIS goes out as the song finishes.]

ADRASTUS. Yet once again a blossom new doth rich
 My withered joys with its soft vernal bloom ;
 O smiling Hour that bearest it, stay here !
 Till that I bid thee fly from earth again. [Turns round.
 The glorious light is gone. (To LYDIS.) The princess left
 But suddenly ; hath aught that I have said
 Offended her ? Speak, is she angered gone ?

LYDIS. You know not Arienis—Anger she
 Knows not ; but rather Melancholy
 Doth rapt sit by her side, soft-teaching her
 The spells of patience and mild love of all.
 The shyest creatures ever came to her ;
 The very birds her white hand hath set free
 From prison home—Buoyed on a limber twig
 Awhile they dance in small relief against
 The cloudless summer sky ; but ere cold winds
 May make their little bodies tremble, back
 They fluttering seek her velvet hand again.

ADRASTUS. Thou saidst a moment since, that she loved all —
 Love ? doth she love ? I mean as she did speak,
 With eloquence that might arrest old Time,
 And bid decay cease, turning all to mirth,
 Flowers, green turf, blue skies and minstrelsy.

LYDIS. Nay, I said not she loved, but rather that
 She nothing hates.

ADRASTUS. Oh, may such peace be e'er
 The vestal tenant of her bosom's shrine.
 Where breathes the man who merits prize like this ?

LYDIS. Well, I must seek my cousin : will you stay,
 Or join Prince Atys, or the royal side
 Of Cræsus ?

ADRASTUS. I will to the King. Farewell! [LYDIS *goes out*.
 If passion were not banished from my soul
 I could almost imagine that I loved her.
 Alas! Adrastus cannot, must not, love.
 Her robe flowed to her feet like mountain rill,
 Whose white and dazzling waters I could kiss,
 Like a tired hunter kneeling thirstily.
 Oh! passion grows not, where hope ne'er may dawn,
 But I, to Contemplation stern betrothed,
 May pleasure take to see her happiness;
 And so her sight shall make my daily food
 Standing aside to watch so fair a being. [Exit.

END OF ACT III.

ACT IV.

Scene 1. The Palace Terrace. CRÆSUS and ATYS.

CRÆSUS. My son, let us together walk awhile
Discoursing gravely of these last-born days :
Say, dost thou like our suppliants, as I hoped ?

ATYS. The Greek I have seen little—he doth rove
Abroad with spear and javelin by day,
At night with Meles revels, or doth seek
The solitary chamber of his friend, whose cheek
Grows day by day less pale—him, I have seen
From hour to hour, and, with my sister, wife,
'Tis my most cherished joy to sit by him.

CRÆSUS. Then thou dost love Adrastus ?

ATYS. He is one
Whom all good men must love ; he bears himself
With such regard to all ; yet excellence
Doth shine in him, o'er all pre-eminent ;
He walks about in soul-bred harmony.
I love to mark, when tale of baseness meets
His all-unwilling ear, how the bright blood
Doth rise in judgment on his thoughtful cheek.

CRÆSUS. 'Tis well ; I am content. Thou art less grieved
Now he is here to pass thy time restrained
From all that might thee peril.

ATYS. It is strange
How soon monotony becomes dear use.
Days pass one like the other ; and I am
Still more content to live so, having found
That one like him of whom thou questionest
Doth sudden joys despise.

CRESUS. Come near, my son,
Lo ! all my pride of conquest is for thee,
For thee my treasure heaped. I've thought to build
An empire with the purchase of my life,
Being all dedicate to toil, that thou mayst reign
Still greater than thy father. He is great
In the proud thought of it. But, thou art dumb,
When clear-voiced triumph fills my swelling breast ;
Say, is it nought, that men and kingdoms quake
As thou dost fall thine eyebrow ?

ATYS.
 Should raise mine eyebrow vainly to assure
 Their love with smiling. Father ! I have found
 'Tis not so happy to be served as loved—
 Yes ! there are moments it weighs heavily
 To be a king—to have all eyes upon one ;
 To have each look, smile, frown weighed, meted out
 Unto the popular craving and demand
 By hearsay dull ; as thus—his majesty
 Coughed thrice, was pale, his beard was trimmed full square ;
 His daughter grieves ; a quarrel late they had
 About the fashion of a page's suit—
 His thoughts are not his own, he's pleased or vexed
 At what he never yet did hear or see.
 His subjects all from prying eyes withdraw
 Their dear domestic hearth ; the palace is
 The hostelry of rude and wanton minds ;
 Where each, in fancy, gapes and stares and flings
 His loose unbuttoned length upon the ground
 That should be sacred to high courtesy.

CRESUS. If such a one doth dare profane our state,
By Phœbus ! he shall feed the birds of air,
His weak, dishonourable body torn
To shreds and pieces. Say, whom dost thou mean ?

ATYS. Nay, think not that I spoke of any: 'twas

The picture of my fancy—I but thought,
 Were I a subject, that I might so sin
 As I have spoken—

CRÆSUS. Strange, degenerate boy!
 Born of the sceptre-snatching Mermnadæ,
 Doth no ambition fire thy sleepy blood?
 Wouldst thou in wretched shadows creep along,
 When in the full blaze of the haughty sun
 Thou mightest shine, dazzling all?

ARRS. Nay! fear me not;
 I'll execute thy wishes, as becomes
 One who doth owe thee life. 'Tis not my fault
 If thought unbidden whisper in mine ear
 Of quiet fortunes, and a narrower wheel
 To hold my fate, than that which rolling tears
 The awe-struck world to tatters. I will shape,
 As doth become a man, mine outward life
 Unto the stirring circumstance around.

CRÆSUS. Harken! For what dost think my wealth is stored?
 To feast the lewd eyes of ambassadors?
 Or vex the Athenian's crabbed, envious soul?
 No! wealth shall bribe, where arms may not prevail;
 With steel and gold I'll build a pyramid
 Whose base shall hurt the corners of the earth,
 And thou shalt sit upon it, and I'll teach
 Thy nerveless hand to hold with iron gripe
 The rod of proud dominion—Ha! why blaze
 Thine eyes not at the thought? Speak! and say why
 Thou art thus cold and motionless? I thought
 To see thee try the paces of a king,
 And frown upon the stars, as I did name
 Such regal destiny. Hast thou no heart
 To be my son? Oh! if a giant crown
 Did hang suspended in the noontide orb
 Of day, I would dilate and grow to it,

And wait not for its closing on my brow.

[CRÆSUS *walks impatiently about.*

ATTIS (*aside*). I seem to be in error whilst I list
Unto his lofty talk ; but, ere the sound
Hath well died in mine ears, comes reason calm
And shrinks the new-born pride. For to such dreams
Well-balanced thought and meditation wise
Are like the statues' marbled excellence,
That on a theatre's wide pediment
Outlive for centuries the petty war
Of one short bustling feverish night within.

CRÆSUS. See how the myriad stars above us shine,
Time's golden coinage from the mint of space ;
Thus be the wealth thou shalt accumulate,
Doubling thy father's treasures till thy power
With gilded fetters shackle all mankind.
The poor Athenian mocked the power of gold ;
Thou shalt enslave his haughty countryman
And bring him captive hither to confess
'Twas cankerous envy framed his sour reply.
Give this assurance to my anxious mind
Ere we do part, that I may feel my thought
Hath made thine pregnant with great enterprise.

ATTIS. I will do all that may become thy son.

CRÆSUS. 'Tis well ; a world-throne thus have I begun.

[*Exeunt.*

Enter ADRASTUS and GLAUCUS, meeting.

GLAUCUS. Why doth Adrastus shun his bosom friend,
And smile and mutter to himself as if
He held communion with a wanton troop
Of unseen spirits, peopling the thin air,
Cleaving its trackless paths and avenues ?

ADRASTUS. Nay, have I not occasion to be sad ?

GLAUCUS. Nay, hast thou not occasion dear for joy ?

ADRASTUS. What meanest thou ?

GLAUCUS. Dissemble not, fond man,

Thou art far gone, and Meles yesterday
Made merry jests upon thy fantasy
As thou dost pore upon the moon's stale face
Sick with the eyes of lovers turned to her—
The princess—

ADRASTUS. Hold ! I charge thee say no more.

Oh ! aid me, Glaucus ! for this must not be.
Methought that I was growing happier,
Who now have saddest reason to be dull,
As Lethe's frozen stream. Nay, let me crush
The hallowed impious wishes of my soul.

GLAUCUS. Dost thou not love her passionately, as—

ADRASTUS. Say all thou canst, thou wilt not fill it up
To my thoughts' measure—

GLAUCUS. As she loveth thee.

ADRASTUS. Thou art mistaken.

GLAUCUS. Look thou, I have marked

Dissimulation strive so feebly in
His guard upon her heart's fair citadel,
That thou wert blind to see it not. Why, man !
'Twas thus thy love did shew itself, and I
Have laughed with my sweet Lydis whom I love
(But thou dost nothing see) to mark you two
Reading each other's eyes with stolen glance
Of fond misapprehension. Left alone,
You had your lives blushed out like silly flowers,
Whom, though on neighbouring stem, no gentle airs
Do bend unto each other's wished embrace
And so they bloom and languish.

ADRASTUS. She loves me ?

Oh heaven ! and 'tis all vain—

GLAUCUS. Why should it be ?

Cræsus doth love thee as his son, the Prince

Already as his dearest friend, and thou,
 Guiltless esteemed by all, thyself condemnest.

ADRASTUS. Alas! she is so innocent and pure,
 And shall I wed her to misfortune's son?

GLAUCUS. And wouldst thou bid her slighted pine to death,
 While all doth flow on like a gentle stream
 To soft flutes playing on the mirror'd banks?
 And wilt thou hesitate, because so blest?
 Were thy love slighted, thou wouldst dare all odds
 To win her from the world. "Misfortune's son?"
 Search well thy soul, if thou wouldst see her wed
 To Fortune's wealthiest heir, or any son
 Save him who calls thy father by that name?

ADRASTUS. Thinkst thou it may be so? then I will die,
 Ere that I yield her to earth's legions ranked
 In shining arms against my single love.
 Now all my sorrow, every sharp fanged thought
 Yield to triumphant love that marshals me
 Unto a new-born life.

GLAUCUS. Come, let us think
 Together of persuasion's softest wiles
 That we may wed our loves: for all is fair,
 Since that their happiness is bound in ours.
 First let us tell young Atys—

ADRASTUS (*apart*). If 'tis wrong
 Forgive me, my sweet brother! and look down
 With blessings upon her, e'en if thou frown'st
 Upon Adrastus' fleeting, faithless oaths
 To live a life of staid and chastened grief,
 The breathing tomb of mournful memories. [*Exeunt.*]

Enter ORCETES and ATYS.

ORCETES. I would that thou hadst seen them, my dear lord,
 How circled round they held him still at bay

And cared not for his roaring, or the wind
 That swayed the mighty forest trees about,
 Which creaked and groaned above as he below
 Did wreath his knotted muscles, lash his sides
 And light the cavern with his eyes of fire
 Blazing as they would scorch the sun-dried mane
 Frightful upreared around his massy head.

ATYS. Brave dogs !

ORÆTES. Ay, brave indeed. The lion tore
 Their shaggy coats with his sharp glistening fangs,
 And still they heeded not, but opened wide
 Their crimson ravenous mouths with deafening cry,
 Upon the royal victim whose hoarse throat
 Did threaten vengeance, like thy father when
 The nations vex him, till by numbers spent,
 And javelins and arrows that bit deep
 Into his glowing entrails, his eye died
 In sullen dimness, and his horrent tail
 Convulsed did feebly flap the miry ground
 Wet with his blood ; his stormy roaring fell
 Into autumnal moaning of the wind,
 And hissing died away, till all was still.

ATYS. I would I had been there.

ORÆTES. It was a beast

Well worth the weapon of a great king's son.

ATYS. Saidst thou that Hector died ?

ORÆTES.

The poor hound fell,

Crushed at the onset by the monster's paw,
 And then an arrow pinned him to the ground
 Meant for the lion ; after all was o'er
 I brought him water in the palms o' my hands,
 But once he touched it, then fell licking me,
 As though he sought alone e'en then to shew,
 After his own poor fashion, his great love
 To tyrant man ; I'm not ashamed to own

ATYS.

ORÆTES. As the loud horn did wind a gallant mort

ATYS.

ORÆTES. It is Ardeknes, whom I once rebuked.

ATYS. I would not have him speak ; I know not why—

Enter ARDEKNES.

ARDEKNES (*to himself*). Ha! let him try with power impotent

ORÆTES. What mutterest thou of kings and oracles?

ARDEKNES (*aside*). Orœtes and the Prince? (*Aloud*) I did

ATYS. For what?

ARDEKNES. A monstrous boar,

air Prince, doth ravage high Olympus round,

that have essayed his death. They have now sent

To pray the aid of Cræsus for a band
Of chosen hunters, whom thou, Prince, shouldst head ;
A task unto thy mind—

ORÆTES. Ha ! is it so ?

Come, let us go, and thou shalt head the band
As he hath said.

ATYS. Alas ! thou dost forget.

ARDEKNES. 'Tis said the Phrygian stranger will be sent
Instead of thee, brave Prince. Sure, thou might'st go :
I dare not say what strikes my thought—

ATYS. Speak, friend !

ARDEKNES. If that thy father could be brought to think,
(But such as I suggest no thought to him)
That all his vision was of pointed steel,
Not fang of tuskéd boar, that threatened thee,
And if the stranger might protect thee, since
His riper age doth give him reason for it,
And that the King doth think so well of him,
Cræsus might let thee go.

ORÆTES (*aside*). I could almost,
For that one thought, forgive him that he is
Ardeknes.

ATTS. I do thank thee for thy hint:
Which, ere I sleep, I'll use unto the King:
Farewell, sir—

ARDEKNES. Noble Prince, farewell. [*Exit ARDEKNES.*]

ATYS. He speaks

So seeming fair to-day, you would not think
Such guilty meanness lies entombed within.

ORÆTES. One scarce would deem from what we just have heard.

Yon man would rob a poor man's child who looked
Smiling up, heedless at the act, or pluck
The few thin hairs away from the lean back
Of a fond, shivering hound on a cold day ;

Thus thoughtful ripening boyhood's careless crimes ;
But it is in him ; I have marked him well.

ATTYS. Sometimes I think but meanly of myself,
Rebuking not as doth become my rank
Such wretches as thou speakst of. I can see
The frightfulness of sin apart, but when
It breathes and speaks before me I am dumb,
Devising pardons in my pitying soul.
But now I called him "friend," whom thou dost deem
So base, so wicked, yet, perchance, 'tis well,
Lest sin reproved should have no care to mend,
Deeming return to good impossible,
Being so scouted of all juster men
And driven beyond all hallowing sympathies.

ORGETES. Thou art too mild,
Pardon me, for thy station, which demands
Some sacrifice of feeling to be just—
But let us to the palace, and there seek
How thou mayst bend great Cræsus to thy wish ;
His pride will stand thee in some stead this time,
Since a whole province hath demanded thee
For aid unto her trouble.

ATTYS.

Let us haste.

[*Exeunt.*]

*Scene 2. The Council Hall of CRÆSUS. CRÆSUS, Deputation of
MYSIAN HUNTERS, ADRASTUS, GLAUCUS, MELES, &c.*

CRÆSUS. It shall be done.

THE DEPUTATION.

Thanks, mighty King—

AGED HUNTER.

We go

Blessing the name of Cræsus—Thy fair son
Shall welcomed be by mothers at their doors,

If we do let him go, it is with thee ;
 Wilt thou be careful of him and respond
 With thine own life for his ?

ADRASTUS. O King, I thought
 Such joys as these to quit for ever more :
 I had not dreamt the merry, cheering cry
 Of glorious sport again should ever part
 From these pale, grieving lips ;—but, since 'tis thus,
 And thou commandest it, I swear on high
 To give him back unto thy loving side,
 Or thou shalt see me dead.

CRÆSUS. 'Tis well, he goes.

AGED HUNTER. Great King, we thank thee for thy heaven-
 sent aid. [*Exeunt.*]

MELES (*going last*). Now, did my friend Adrastus drink
 more wine,

I would be of this hunting. 'Tis dry work,
 And therefore I will stay where cellars are,
 My part shall be the "Jolly Hunter's" sign
 Whereby a man may swear—Heaven speed the Prince !

[*Exeunt all but CRÆSUS and ATYS.*]

CRÆSUS. Thou wilt be careful then ?

ATYS. I promise thee.

CRÆSUS. Stay ! I would have thee wear the Egyptian suit
 Of light chain armour that I spake of—

ATYS. What !

Armour a-hunting ? why, all men would laugh.

CRÆSUS. But I would have it so.

ATYS. 'Twould cumber me.

CRÆSUS. I'll have it so—

ATYS. Then I had better stay,
 Nor go at all.

CRÆSUS. Oh, 'tis my love for thee
 That makes me hateful to thine ardent soul,
 Cursing all sad delays.

ATYS. Believe it not ;
And, father, I'll not go.

CRÆSUS. Thou must, thou must,
My royal word is pledged. Adrastus comes ;
He must not see the King's soul so disturbed—
Embrace me ! ere 'tis dawn thou goest hence. [*Exit CRÆSUS.*]

Re-enter ADRASTUS.

ATYS. Well, hast thou Arienis seen, my friend ?

ADRASTUS. I have.

ATYS. What says she ?

ADRASTUS. She doth bid me look
Unto thy safety.

ATYS. No word of thine own ?

ADRASTUS. But as thy friend—

ATYS. O woman ! when thou lovest
As the scared plover wiles the spoiler's step
From where her trembling heart lies with her eggs
Or callow young, are thy devices seen
By one who knows where thy fond fancy points ;
How thou wilt ask a thousand nothings, with
As many blushing treasons to thy thought,
Ere thou wilt speak of him for whom thou pinest ;
How thou wilt suffer from anxiety,
Ere thou wilt ask what, if thou didst not love,
'Twould cost thee nought to say—so natural
It would become thy lip. She loves thee well.
I know it, therefore fear not, and I swear
To bend my father to your eager wish,
Ere we have long returned : I am not sure,
He hath not planned it in his own soul ; thus
Thou mayst unto the field with a light foot
Bearing a joyous heart. Come, let us in
Unto my sister. We shall Glaucus find
Laughing with Lydis and my cheerful wife, .

And we must seek our trappings for the hunt,
The joyful hunt ; for we must rise betimes. [Exit ATYS.]

ADRASTUS. Few men may tread the weary path of life
O'ershadowed by dark thunder-clouds of grief,
But that they mark some fair and sunny day
That brightened their existence—each event
Of gladness round them gathering, like the dash
Of rippling waves around a gilded bark
Upon a summer sea, then Hope erect
Stands on the prow and points toward a shore
Far in the distant glow of sunny eve—
Who hath not sometime on such sea put forth
Nor dreamt of tempests ? Oh ! it will go hard
But I will shield the dear life of this boy ;
And then we will return and then !—To-day
I heard my sire is well who long hath pined—
Yes, all is well ! and now unto my love.

[Exit ADRASTUS. Scene closes.]

Scene 5. A Room in the Palace. Enter ADRASTUS and ARIENIS.

ADRASTUS. Dost thou so love me ? Speak it—

ARIENIS. Since thou goest
Unto some danger—Yes !

ADRASTUS. And wilt thou link
Thy golden destiny with my sad life ?

ARIENIS. If thou wouldst have it so.

ADRASTUS. O woman ! woman !
Thou, with no backward glance on that thou leavest,
Wouldst goddess-like from Jove's high throne descend
To guide an erring step through misery,
Light a dark spirit, heal a bruised heart,

And with sweet desperation of thine eye
 Inspire new joys within the breast of him
 Whom a strange dog would scorn to follow. Look !
 Seest thou yon paly star ?
 Ages have seen its pure rays glimmer there
 And 'twill not know decay ; and I have thought,
 When it should silver o'er my dying face,
 To have no part in dim eternity—
 Ceasing to be ; and I have wished it thus.
 But now my love hath life like yonder star,
 And cannot die—I feel its glowing breath
 Will linger in creation. Memory
 Of this one hour shall give me fellowship
 With all that's bright and dies not.

ARIENIS.

It is true—

For I do feel the same. To me, 'tis strange
 How, ere I knew thee, I could wish to live,
 That now were lost without thee ;—how I spoke
 And moved and dreamless slept and breathed and looked,
 Having no thought of thee. I am as one
 Waked from a trance, to which return were death.

ADRASTUS. Speak not of death—

ARIENIS.

Why shouldst thou fear his power ?

Thou saidst just now our love should live for ever.

ADRASTUS. It will, on my part—

ARIENIS.

If thou speakest thus

I'll punish thee and talk no more of love.

Say, hast thou seen my brother ?

ADRASTUS.

An hour since

Came he to me, with dogs and bow and spears ;
 Full of equipment and each new device
 Of the sharp, eager chase.

ARIENIS.

How well he looked

This night. His soft and bright hair upward waved
 All in confusion, like a Cupid's, dragged

Through tangled sweet-briar brake by romping nymphs
That caught him sleeping with his bow unbent—

ADRASTUS. Thus roses first had birth, so grafted on
The briar that love touched. Such miracle
Hath love to bloom 'mid thorns.

ARIENIS. Come, let us seek
Our Atys.

ADRASTUS. Art thou tired?

ARIENIS. I would ask
His counsel—

ADRASTUS. If thy father frown on us.

ARIENIS. Nay, but he will not. I would kneel to him,
And he would come down from his council throne,
Like that same goddess thou didst tell me of,
And clasp me to his arms and grant my prayer—
His blessing and forgiveness for us both.

ADRASTUS. I feel such sacred bliss in loving thee
It cannot be a crime: else I might think
It were not right to hide it from thy sire
A moment. Oh! a thing so pure, so blest,
So hallowed, is right.

ARIENIS. Nay, 'tis my thought—
Death cannot part us. How should joy and life? [*Exeunt.*]

END OF ACT IV.

ACT V.

Scene 1. The Mysian Olympus, as before. A large tree across the Stage. Horns, cries of HUNTERS. Parties cross rapidly.

Enter THREE HUNTERS.

FIRST HUNTER. The day is fair, the hunt goes merrily—
This way he went.

SECOND HUNTER. Three times his dusky form
Hath rushed before mine eyes, in the deep shade
Of crackling brushwood.

FIRST HUNTER. It is strange he flies
To-day! 'twas never so before—

THIRD HUNTER. 'Tis fear
Of Atys and his gallant company.
The coward knows his death is nigh—On! on!
We must not lag here—each unto his stand. [*Exeunt.*]

Scene 2. The same.

Enter ATYS.

ATYS. Orætes said that he would come this way—
What if I kill him without help? My bride
And saucy Lydis will not mock me then!
Adrastus and his friend will envy me,
And Arienis' liquid, deep blue eye
Light up with wonderment as she doth part
My hair with her cool fingers. I'll hide there,
Where the thick leafy top of yon tall tree
That some great thunderbolt of Heaven hath slain
Doth promise me a kindly ambush—then
I'll strike the huge beast as he passes by. [*Goes out.*]

Scene 3. The same.

Enter ADRASTUS.

ADRASTUS. Hither young Atys came, too jealous of
My watchful care. Oh! Heaven, if he should fall
Into the monster's path, and I not there!
The boar fled, too, this way—Hist! what is that?
Surely 'tis our grim foe! Diana, now,
Aid me to lay him prostrate. There he is—

*[Throws his javelin. A scream
is heard. Rushes out.]*

What magic this? That was a human voice.

Re-enter ADRASTUS with ATYS in his arms.

ATYS. Oh! thou hast stricken me, my friend beloved!
I fear to death—too true thy weapon. Oh!
It was my folly—Thou art guiltless—Fly!
Would I could live—to tell them—pardon thee—
And Arienis—thy hand—brother—so— *[Dies.]*

ADRASTUS. Prince! Atys! brother! answer, or I die.
Oh! my heart bursts not, mine eyes weep not; tears
Would mock this burning sorrow—Hark! who comes?
I am no murderer, and yet this deed
Is a most cruel witness. Hark! who comes?
His eyes shall see two deaths. *(Snatches his dagger, gazes on it,
and flings it away.)* What brought thee here?
Thou curséd instrument! Ye gods, it is
The dagger that I struck my brother with,
And hurled away from me, and now 'tis come
Winged by the infernal ministers to me
Through air again. Oh! horrid and most strange,
It drips with blood. Look how my hands are stained!
Great Jove, are all thy lightnings spent that thou
Must use me for thy will? They have no heart

When they do strike. They are not torn like me
With their own fiery anguish.

Enter GLAUCUS.

GLAUCUS.

Oh rejoice !

The day is ours—the monster lieth stark—
I slew him. Come, no jealousy, my friend :
Thou mightst as well have done it—

ADRASTUS.

I have done more !

Stand off ! or I may slay thee. Thou'rt my friend—
I love thee—I can kill with glances—See,
Mine eyes are javelins—

GLAUCUS.

Art ill, Adrastus ?

What's this ?—the Prince—and wounded ! He came not
Near to the boar.

ADRASTUS.

Dost thou not hear ? Away !

There's danger to thee. I am armed with points
To stab my friends' hearts. I lie not—look there—
I have slain him !

GLAUCUS.

What lightning blasts mine eyes ?

ADRASTUS. I thought to stab myself, but now I see

It were not well to do it, for 'tis fit,

That first all know my innocence of this—

Hark ye, I thought

To strike the boar beneath yon leafy spot,

And I have slain the Prince, that hid him there :

His blanched lips parted moist with crimson blood,

To kill me with his pardon, ere he died—

And yet I live, who would have died for him.

Hast thou no frenzy, Glaucus ? Speak ! ye trees,

And ghastly rocks that chill me—Shout, 'tis true

I would have died for him.

GLAUCUS.

Away ! Fly, ere

They come—I'll tell it all—

ADRASTUS.

Thou toldest me

To live before, or I had died, ere this.
 Art thou a Fate to push me on to sin ?
 Thy breath is hotter than a friend's. See, see,
 Thou mayst exult there. 'Twas an accident
 Like to the other—But mine honour is
 Mine own ; though men fall dead where I do come
 And trembling nature sicken at my step.

GLAUCUS. Adrastus, thou art mad, or this indeed
 Is cruel of thee—What have I e'er done,
 But give thee truest love ?

ADRASTUS. O Glaucus ! Glaucus !
 Indeed I saw thee not, when I did speak ;
 Methought another stood there in thy place
 With cold and glassy eyes, like charnel lamps
 Mid dim putrescence of the sheeted dead.
 I have no weapon—clasp me to thy breast,
 Forgiving me my ravings—I will fly,
 But not to live—I have a message—Haste—
 I must haste. Will they not injure thee ?

GLAUCUS. No ! no ! there is no danger, since but now
 I left them. Fly !

ADRASTUS. Farewell—Haste ! Haste ! Haste !

GLAUCUS. Whither can he be fled ? Alas ! to death,
 Being so guiltless. Who shall tell the King
 His son lies stricken thus ?
 All seems the background to a funeral.
 The piping winds do play unto the trees
 Sad measure, as they bend, like shrinking ghosts
 Shunning some awful summons—How he lies,
 As he had never moved ! Alas ! alas !
 Adrastus, whither art thou gone ? To seek thy death
 Afar, from horrid-pointing grief and hate ?
 Or dost thou ask a farewell of thy love ?
 They shall not hinder thee—for I will swear
 The deadly blow was mine : thus thou'lt have time

To work thy will—and, if they slay me, so—
 I care not—if thou sayst thou hast a friend,
 And that friend, Glaucus. If they come not soon
 I shall believe I did it—Hilloh! hither!
 Methought another cried—'twas not my voice:
 Will no one come? *[Horn and voices heard.]*

Enter HUNTERS.

FIRST HUNTER. Where is the Prince?
 GLAUCUS. There!
 FIRST HUNTER. Slain!
 SECOND HUNTER. Wretch! thou hast murdered him.
 GLAUCUS. Thou liest; 'twas
 An accident—he hid beneath yon tree,
 I thought to pierce a wolf.
 SECOND HUNTER. Ye hear it—Why
 Do ye not hew him down?
[They attack GLAUCUS, who defends himself.]
 GLAUCUS. To Styx! and ask
 Himself, how it did chance.

Enter ORÆTES.

ORÆTES. Hold! quarrelling?
 Who is there?
 FIRST HUNTER. 'Tis the Prince!
 ORÆTES. O horror! dead?
 Now let Orætes die—Who hath done this?
(The HUNTERS point to GLAUCUS.)
 Strike not—secure him! *(GLAUCUS is disarmed.)* Speak, where
 is the Prince
 Adrastus?
 GLAUCUS. He was here but now, and fled
 Driven mad with sorrow at the unwitting deed.
 AN AGED HUNTER *(who has entered with ORÆTES)*. Oh, 'tis
 true—I met him now,

And death shone in his eye—I spoke to him,
 But he did answer nought. A faint, white smile
 Spread its soft horror o'er his conscious face
 And then he seemed to sicken and grow faint
 And let connexion with the things around him
 Slip from his aspen hand that opened wide
 Whose bristling fingers pointed—beaded sweat
 Stood on his forehead, like the mildewed damp
 Seen on sepulchral marble—his lips moved,
 But ere the sound did come he fled straight on,
 With eyebrows wreathed like those of him who first
 In the world's earliest ages thinking but
 To rouse some laggard sleeper from his rest,
 Saw green Corruption there and shrieking named
 The thing he gazed on "Death."

[ORÆTES, *who is on his knees by ATYS,*
points to GLAUCUS.

ORÆTES.

He did it not!

Why threaten him? (*Looking at ATYS.*) His heart is silent—'twas
 The pulse in mine own hand—O friends! there is
 Meaning in this, beyond misfortune due
 To common sons of clay. The gods have thought
 To envy Croesus, and cut short this bough,
 The summer hope of all.
 Raise ye his body—I'll attend him back,
 That came forth with him triumphing—This frame
 Shall feebly last unto the end—and then
 The gods need strike me not—lead on—It is
 The last hunt of Orætes. Who shall dare
 Whisper the wrath of Heaven to the King?

[*Exeunt. As they go out thunder is heard.*

*Scene 4. Night. Before the Gates of Sardis.**Enter Two SENTINELS, meeting.*

FIRST SENTINEL. 'Tis a warm night—

SECOND SENTINEL. Nay, cold—dost thou
not see

How I am shivering?

FIRST SENTINEL. Why, hast thou slept,
Or hath aught frightened thee? Thy rattling teeth
Sound like steel fretting ere a fight begins.SECOND SENTINEL. Hast thou e'er seen Adrastus, him that
went

A hunting two days since with our young Prince?

FIRST SENTINEL. Why, yes, I have—well?

SECOND SENTINEL. He is dead!

FIRST SENTINEL. How so?

Hast thou just killed him?

SECOND SENTINEL. No, but his Shade came

To visit me just now.

FIRST SENTINEL. 'Twas in thy sleep—

SECOND SENTINEL. Nay! for I drew my sword to pierce him,
sinceHe would not answer; but with icy stare
He fixed me to the spot—my unnerved arm
Let fall the weapon which struck fire upon
The flinty pavement; as I stooped, the place
Where he did move was empty.FIRST SENTINEL. Perhaps 'twas he
Himself.SECOND SENTINEL. 'Twas a foot taller than the Prince—
Had fiery eyes, although his look fell cold
Upon my heart and blood ran down his vest
From twenty gaping eyelets—whilst his hair
Did prickly point up-streaming to the moon

Like the fierce armed alce. Dost thou not
Believe me ?

FIRST SENTINEL. No ! not I—But thou art right,
The air is piercing cold. Wilt thou not come
With me, lest it should pass again ? They say
One should not be alone.

SECOND SENTINEL. Nay ! 'twill not come
Again, methinks, 'twas in such hurry, as
If waited for.

FIRST SENTINEL. By whom ? Thou art a fool !
The night grows chilly ; come, 'tis very cold.

SECOND SENTINEL. It went into the city—Didst thou see
At noon how many horsemen left the gates,
As 'twere to scour the country ?

FIRST SENTINEL. True ; dost know
Why 'twas so ?

SECOND SENTINEL. Nay, I do not ; but strange things
Have been reported. Two or three have said
The King hath lost his senses.

FIRST SENTINEL. Lies ! wert thou
A king, there would be fools enough to say
Thou hadst found thine. Come, make thy round, 'tis time.

[Scene closes.]

Scene 5. A Chamber in the Palace. ADRASTUS and ARIENIS.

ARIENIS. Thou shalt not go. Frown not ; 'twas accident ;
Thou couldst not help it. Let me part thy hair
That knotted hangs upon thy haggard brow
And as I do it, speak to thee.

ADRASTUS. No ! no !
I am thy brother's slayer ! stand apart !

I came to tell thee of it with these lips .
 And say I was forgiven by himself,
 That thou mightst hate me not.

ARIENIS. I hate thee ? Hear !
 If the great gods should curse thee, I would bless,
 While my convulsed lips, bloodless, lived to frame
 Thick-coming blessings. Listen ! I would bless
 Another for thy sake, if thou didst love her,
 And die lest I should grieve thee with sad looks.
 Turn not away from her who tells thee this ;
 Thou mayst kill all, but canst not kill my love.

ADRASTUS. Like to a cithara, whose strings have hung
 Twirling all loosened in the cruel winds
 Till the light touch that music once evoked
 Wakes but discordant agony of sound,
 Each sense, O gods ! with fiercer anguish throbs
 At her soft words, that steal so wooingly—
 Thou dost forgive me, then ? For pity's sake
 Say nothing more than this.

ARIENIS. Hear me ; I'll be
 Thy bride, thy love ; come, let us fly. Look, look !
 Our Atys points the way. I see him.

ADRASTUS. Where ?

ARIENIS. Hold ! hold, it was but fancy ; still, methought
 He motioned me to clasp thee thus and swear
 To die too, if thou shouldst. His gentle lips
 Spoke soft approving murmurs in mine ear,
 When I did tell thee " live," and that I loved thee,
 Unchanged by all.

ADRASTUS. Say not so, lest I dream
 That I am happy, and then wake to find
 The thing I am, at once, and frenzied shriek
 With horror to the elements the name,
 The accursed name, Adrastus, till at length
 Exhausted I fall prostrate, dead and cold,

With the last echoes of that blighted word.

ARIENIS. If that my presence shock thy nobler sense,
If I may not watch o'er thee, fly alone
Unto some distant clime, where my sad love
Shall still attend thee—Arienis swears
Never to love but thee, and she will sit
And weave fair chaplets for our Atys' grave
By yonder window, gazing on the star
Thou dost remember, lingering o'er in thought
Each shade and light that crossed thy marble brow
When thou wast with her.

ADRASTUS. No! Dishonour ne'er
Shall stain that brow.

ARIENIS. Oh, honour! 'tis a word
That men oft use to do unkindest deed
And crush the gentle hearts that love them well.
Will thy cold honour kill my burning love?
My father, Croesus, he will slay thee, ere
He weigh the deed, in his tremendous rage,
Then I shall die too, and his daughter's loss
Will bow the old man down. Is this thine honour?

ADRASTUS. I cannot live a fugitive—I swore
Unto the King to give him back his son,
In safety or to die and I have slain him
With mine own hand. Yet still I cling to thee
With the last frenzy of this tortured heart.
My love shall haunt thee like a summer breeze
When I am dead. If souls be not unbound,
I'll break my bonds to reach thee; but on earth
We must not meet again. Thou wouldst not hear
My name a common byword, a stale sign
For perjured, base ingratitude. No! no!
Loose me.

ARIENIS. If he doth spare thee, thou wilt live?

ADRASTUS. Tempt me not.

ARIENIS. Stay! [A gong strikes.

ADRASTUS. Hark! the dead hours of Night
Are passed, I must begone—I am no more
As of the living—when thou thinkest of
This meeting, set it down as a sad dream
With the whole memory of Adrastus.

ARIENIS (*kneeling.*) Oh!
Spare him.

ADRASTUS. She hears me not. Her small hand clasps
My vest. Stay, let me kiss that little hand
With a last message, thus! With those white arms
For whose soft empire I have died in dreams
She clings around my knees—I cannot go.
I slew her brother! my oath! Croesus! Death!
Where are ye? Aid me!

[*He embraces her and goes out.* ARIENIS
falls senseless to the ground.

Scene 6. A Street in Sardis. Early Morning. SADYATTES,
Two ARTISANS, and afterwards a GENTLEMAN.

FIRST ARTISAN. Is't true, sir! what we hear?

SADYATTES. Ay, that the Prince
Is killed and by one of the strangers.

FIRST ARTISAN. How?

SADYATTES. By accident, as he did launch his spear
At the huge Mysian boar, but two days since.

SECOND ARTISAN. How strange that we did fancy such
an end

To proud prosperity. Alas! mine eyes
Are traitors to my sense of justice, when
I think of the young Prince.

FIRST ARTISAN. And Cræsus' self
I do forgive, that he hath so forgotten
Our misery and griefs.

SECOND ARTISAN. On his proud throne
He was so far from us, he knew us not
And all our woes.

SADYATTES. The man, there is no doubt,
Had noble qualities, which shone in him
Upon the bed of greatness where he slept
Like treasures on a quicksand. Worse than he
Are they, the lords and flatterers of his State,
Who, as foul priests surround their god betrayed
With earthly barriers of polluting greed,
Stand like a javelin guard around his heart
To hurl back bruised and bleeding sympathies.

FIRST ARTISAN. How think you, then, that he will bear
this blow?

SECOND ARTISAN. But now I met him who was here with us,
The gaunt, grim workman, sense-bereft by woe,
Who lost his wife and child by famine's tooth.
"Ho, Ho," he howled, "rare sport! Calamity,
Our long familiar, hath ta'en fright at us
And gone with Pride a-masking. Tell me, you!
The King's heart—is it made of stuff like mine?
Will't crack or bend? or doth Wealth feel not e'en
For its own flesh and blood? If he doth feel,
How his soft hand must melt beneath the grasp,
The iron grasp, that such as we give back,
Looking Grief sternly in the face; but he
Will storm and bustle finely." I rebuked
His most unseemly joy.

SADYATTES. The King will rise
From such a fall a meek and chastened man.
His glorious noon of merry day is past,
And with his night comes Thought, whose pale cheek mocks

Her red blood's feeling core—And Wisdom's light
 Is oftenest but a torch lit at the funeral
 Of Joy—It is most strange
 How misery doth wake the sleeping sense
 Of others' slighted woes :—I have known one
 Who, in the fierce abandonment of wealth,
 Did riot and ne'er gave ; but, when the form
 Of pinching Need came near him, so that he
 Might read the wrinkled anguish of her face,
 Unto a beggar poorer than himself
 But by a trifle he would proffer gold,
 Sighing such want to notice. Oh ! the poor
 Are the poor's almoners ; else would die crowds
 That none know how they live—how life in them
 Still feebly lurks from morn to ghastly eve,
 From eve to haggard morn.

FIRST ARTISAN. How true he speaks.

SECOND ARTISAN. Then, sir ! think you the King will alter
 much ?

Enter a GENTLEMAN.

GENTLEMAN. Oh, I have strange news how this sad event
 Hath come about—

SADYATTES. How was it ? Speak—

GENTLEMAN. Ye know,

How a Soothsayer from far Delphos came,
 With oracle deceiving, as 'twas said.

SADYATTES. E'en so.

GENTLEMAN. Well, then, the oracle did send
 Sad warning to the King—

SADYATTES. How missed he then
 To take it ?

GENTLEMAN. Thus—thou knowst the King brooks not
 Delay or explanation in his mood
 And so it happened in his sudden rage

That he mistook, or would not hear to the end
 His most confused messenger who left
 The royal presence disconcerted much,
 And therewith met Ardeknes—ye have seen
 The man so kindly treated by the Prince—
 And gave to him the message of the gods.

SADYATTES. Why did he so ?

GENTLEMAN. It was his purpose then
 To leave for home this country instantly.

SADYATTES. And did Ardeknes speak not ?

GENTLEMAN. So it seems ;
 And 'twere not known how came this fatal chance
 But for a strange mishap—

SADYATTES. We do entreat
 That you will tell us how—

GENTLEMAN. The Soothsayer
 Had scarcely turned a moment to depart,
 When from a lofty flight of marble steps
 He fell.

SADYATTES. What then ?

GENTLEMAN. Some poor man took him up,
 And nursed him in his fever—he did rave
 And beg to see the King ; whereat they smiled
 That heard him, thinking it brain-fantasy ;
 But on the fourth day he recovering much
 So prayed to have his wish before his end
 They did believe him.

SADYATTES. Say on.

GENTLEMAN. A short while
 Elapsed, ere gained they hearing through some friend
 Who knew a servant at the Court, and then
 Croesus at mention of his son's name left
 The palace, and straight sought the poor man's roof
 With few attendants.

SADYATTES. But it was too late ?

GENTLEMAN. The morning after they had left—what words
Did pass between them there, none knew ; but when
He strode towards the palace, the King's face
Showed terrible as with an earthquake's rent ;
Whilst on his scant low bed the Soothsayer
Lay smiling still in death.

SADYATTES. Say, dost thou know
If yet the hunters are returned with him
Whose fate we have just learnt ?

GENTLEMAN. No—Croesus waits,
In awful sorrow clad, the lifeless form
Of him that was the Prince.

SADYATTES. And he, the wretch
Who did betray him ?

GENTLEMAN. Who ? Ardeknes ? He
Is taken ; but no word of him hath passed
The royal lip.

SECOND ARTISAN. 'Tis said he hanged himself,
In terror.

FIRST ARTISAN. I would not be in his place
Or his that killed the Prince, if I might grasp
The treasures of the King.

GENTLEMAN. 'Tis vain to say
What doth await them.

SADYATTES. This indeed we know—
No golden coin will bribe the shrivelled grasp
Of Sorrow ; and the awful eye of kings frights not
Grief from her fated quarry, circling round
Crown or tiara still she stoops the same
And plumes the shrinking head of majesty.
The world rounds not in one man : with frail wand
Fortune may trace a larger little ring
High on the sand for his proud destiny,
Needing alone a somewhat fiercer surge

To dash it into nothing—Then, good night !
 King, nation, all fade from the aching sight.

[*Exeunt.*]

Scene 7. The Council Hall. CRÆSUS on his Throne. MELES, THONIS, NOBLES, OFFICERS, ATTENDANTS, &c. Then enter HUNTERS with the body of ATYS covered with a mantle. GLAUCUS, ORÆTES, MYSIANS. Afterwards ADRASTUS.

CRÆSUS. Back to my heart I'll chase each subject tear,
 Scarf up emotion's pitying regard
 And then throne right-armed vengeance on my brow,
 Gathering the horrid trouble of my brain
 In one fierce centre of wide-wrinkled hate ;
 With eye of flame like brand in midnight cave
 Scorch guilt's accusing conscience, till consumed
 It shrivel, as before great Jove himself.
 Say ! do they come ?

ATTENDANT. Great King, they are at hand.

Enter with the Body, &c. CRÆSUS advances to it, looks on his Son, and then returns.

CRÆSUS. There is a shadow between earth and sky
 That chills the blood of Cræsus. O my son !
 Yon fearful outline of thy shrouded form
 Huddled in dark unconsciousness of all
 Thy father's agony
 Beggars the pomp with which mine eyes were fed
 And strips me naked to the storms of Heaven,
 Making my throne a proud deformity,
 My sceptre worthless as a shrivelled reed,
 My crown a gift unto the shrinking head

Of the infected wretch that crawls about
 Making day hideous, and all my state
 A palsied nothing—
 And do ye call me monarch, king? Away!
 Ye cringing slaves!
 Bring not your pale false faces here to mock
 Cræsus with sympathy, or ye shall mourn
 As he doth, till one desolation towers
 Above the howling city and I see
 One vacant stare of childless parents round—
 No! no! no!
 Ye could not match your common griefs with mine.

ATTENDANT. O King!

There stands he who hath done this.

CRÆSUS.

Ay, done what?

Stabbed a fond mother, so that her small babe
 Smiling drew blood with milk, or dulled the eyes
 Of lovers at their nuptials with foul juice
 Of poison, and then held his sides to see
 Grimace of death to rapture sweet succeeding?
 No! He hath only slain my son, my heart—
 Where is he?

ATTENDANT (*points to GLAUCUS*). There!

Enter ADRASTUS.

ADRASTUS.

Here! Cræsus, it was I,

This fated hand did kill him—

CRÆSUS.

Ha! What—two!

Is not one plenty? Two to strike my son?
 Hath crime like this a double? Hell-hounds, speak!
 Which did it?

ADRASTUS. 'Twas to shield me that he said

The fearful curse was his. He was not there
 When it did happen—

ORÆTES. Said I not 'twas so?

CRÆSUS. Give freedom to the Greek. He hath done well
By holy friendship. (*To ADRASTUS.*) But thou, impious wretch!
Be my words fiery scorpions to thy heart—
Why hast thou slain him? Couldst not rob me, say,
Of some great treasure to thy benefit?
Thou cam'st here empty-handed, wast received
With mercy drowned in tears. Say, couldst thou not,
Like other suppliants, fattened, drop away,
So that I might have smiled at and not cursed
Thy fierce ingratitude, and looked upon it
As a rare, curious deformity,
Not to be gazed on twice? No! thy parched hand
Thirsted for blood alone, that blood so dear,
With drought as of the desert—But reproach
Becomes not Cræsus. Answer thy fierce deed
To the dread kings of Hell, where it was forged—
Away with him unto the torturers!

ADRASTUS. King! I would speak awhile; and since I came
Unbound to yield myself unto thy will
In that mute awful presence shrouded there—
Hear me.—Alas! I wish not to deny
I am the most calamitous of men:
Therefore would live not. But the gods, not I,
Mysterious willed his death—and since I loved
Young Atys as my soul forgive me ere
I willing die and I will smile on death—
(*Turns to GLAUCUS.*) O friend, why peril thy bright life for
mine?

If thou hadst died I had gone mad and roamed
The world, 'till grey, slow age had stricken me,
Crying "Out! out!" on Justice and the Heavens.

ORÆTES. Let me bear witness with these aged lips
That shall be silent soon for ever, how
He sought to guard the Prince from harm, before

This fearful accident—

CRÆSUS. So far we pardon—

Untortured let him die, as he hath said.

Enter MESSENGER.

MESSENGER. Great King! thy daughter hath not strength
to rise,

But she doth pray thee spare Adrastus' life.

THONIS. He slew thy son.

GLAUCUS. The gods did slay him, Cræsus!

If the black clouds stooped o'er thy head, until
Their serpent lightnings hissed into thine eyes
Making the soul within them lustreless,
Wouldst call thy executioner and bid
The storms of Heaven die? His arm, who stands
Devoted yonder, was but the instrument
Of the incensed Immortals.

THONIS (*points to the body.*) He lies there!

And there the man who stabbed him breathes in life.

'Tis sweet to live—Justice and death! I ask.

MELES (*aside.*) He drank no wine, and yet I cannot think
But he is guiltless—

ADRASTUS. She hath spoken truth;

I am not fit to breathe; I would not live.

O Cræsus, thou wast as a father, when
I sought thy royal presence. Thou gavest me
Not bread alone, but smiles, receiving me
With love and hope, and washed me from my crime
And sheltered me in that most royal heart
Which hapless I have pierced—'Twas accident!
Beneath the branches of an o'erthrown tree
He hid himself, and as they rustling shook
I flung my spear, and struck him whom I loved
And thought but to protect with mine own life,

The life I pledged to thee. Now, let me die.
Would I could give thee more than this sad breath !

CRÆSUS. Accurséd thou camest here, accurst, depart !
Guards—free him !

THONIS. Is thy heart so cold, O King ?
Colder than that pale corse, thy son, who lies
There stricken, that thou freest his murderer, thus ?

ADRASTUS. Poor widowed lady, reft of all through me !
Thou greatest, saddest loser ! speak thy fill.
My speech doth wound the breast that pillowed him,
Or I would tell thee of his latest wish,
That ye should pardon one who seeketh grace
To welcome his own doom.

THONIS (*looking toward the bier of ATYS*). His voice is still !
And yet what message-cry thrills through my heart
Pleading for that pale, hapless, self-doomed man ?

ADRASTUS. Had I as many lives as would out-tell
Want's pallid legions, Sorrow's muster-roll
In this unhappy world, I would pour forth
All—all—to give thy bosom peace again.

THONIS. I do remember thy great love for him.

ADRASTUS. Oh, fearful, most unnatural, cruel change !
'Tis scarce a week since we three smiling sat
And planned out life and love and hope ; and now—

THONIS. No ! no ! thou must not die, but live to mourn
With us. (*To CRÆSUS.*) Forgive him ! he is innocent
As we who bade them go. My senses fail—

Forgive— [*She is borne out fainting.*]

CRÆSUS (*to ADRASTUS.*) What further wouldst thou say ?

ADRASTUS. I loved him well that lies there. He forgave
The blow I struck, and if my cruel spear
Had pierced less deep he would have lived to seek
Pardon for his loved enemy—"Tis true
No tears do stain my cheeks ; yet, had he died
By other hand than mine, I would have wept

Longer than all these others—Oh, forgive me,
 Ere I go forth—I will not bless thy name ;
 But from my heart in silence there shall steal
 A prayer for thee, that leaving me shall grow
 Unto a voice and fill the earth, the skies
 With Cræsus' love and at the crystal gates
 That ope on high the clouded battlements
 Of Heaven itself speak out with clarion sound
 The news of thy great justice.

CRÆSUS.

Thou art forgiven !

Go !

ADRASTUS. I would have it thus—I thank thee for
 The life thus granted, and the sacred words
 That did forgive the ruin of thy joy—
 Thy form dilated a few moments since
 In anger—but thy spirit shrank within,
 Hiding itself, that now expands on high.
 Thou grow'st sublime upon my aching sight !
 Not sunshine glittering on a prosperous throne,
 Not whispered awe of conquered multitude
 Prostrate beneath a victor's haughty glance—
 Not the death-radiance of a patriot's eye
 Upturned to the warm sun, whose broken sword
 Out-stretched still menaces, while he heeds not
 The bristling death around him—Not all wealth
 Wrought to the fancy of imperious man
 To arm a host, or deck rich palaces—
 Not ocean in its fury, skies in storm—
 Or play of spirits on the eternal sands
 Heaving gigantic o'er the furnaced plain—
 Not booming cataract whose silvery foam
 Makes pale the mossy green, as it doth rise
 Coloured with glorious hues of dazzling light,
 Transparent pall unto the constant death
 Of fierce, resistless waters gambolling—

Nought that is terrible, or bright, or good—
 O King ! upon the wide face of the earth
 There is no grander sight
 Than injury like this forgiven.—Farewell, friends,
 And farewell, mighty King ! now mightiest, since
 Thou hast thyself so conquered—But deem not
 Adrastus keeps the life he hath so begged
 To call down new misfortunes from the skies—
 Monarch ! I go to death.

CRÆSUS. No ! Thou goest not.
 Embrace me, I forgive thee. 'Twas no crime
 Of thine, that he is dead whom we both loved—
 Live ! Thou shalt be my son.

[ADRASTUS looks upward with emotion, and then, making obeisance to the KING, suddenly leaves the Hall. A Dead March is played, during which the Court dissolves, the KING slowly leading the way.]

Scene 8. Before the Tomb of ATYS. A Fountain playing in the distance. ADRASTUS.

ADRASTUS. He said that I should live and be his son—
 O Cræsus ! thinkest thou that I could live
 To bring fresh sorrow to the hearts I love ?
 Alas ! thou knowest not Adrastus' soul,
 That hath been linked to sad calamity
 'Till he and it are one.
 This is the spot ! Yon fountain nimbly plays
 Hymning with joyous, sparkling madrigals
 Unto the stars, as if there were no Grief
 Stalking the fevered world. As I came hither,
 Methought grim Até and the Furies sat

Grouped on the lofty house-tops motionless,
 Brooding upon the sorrow at the hearths
 Of those that wail within ; dark towering Shapes
 Whose phantom outlines seemed as wind-torn clouds,
 Or drowsy, crop-full forms of birds obscene
 With outstretched pinions, behind whom slow rises
 A moaning hurricane—One giant arm
 Waving from out their spectral company
 Like the black shadow of a storm-swayed branch
 Marshalled me on—O Atys ! I am come
 A willing sacrifice unto thy grave—
 Yet once I wished to live—Alas ! Love brought
 Hope but a useless mourner to a tomb,
 Where bending on her arm she may stay fixt,
 Pointing to Heaven for the end alone
 Of pale Adrastus' misery. (*Draws a dagger.*) Thou false steel,
 That smilest with cold glance, aid me to sleep,
 That I may be at rest. I heard one say
 Long since, that e'en their sleep whose impure life
 Doth riot in the streets is often bright
 With dreams of innocence—Oh ! thus should death,
 The greatest sleep of all, seal up mine eyes
 With luxury of calmness—All
 Will pardon me to-morrow—Death pays all,
 Where the heart never sinned ; and some perchance
 With beaming eyes will bless me that late gazed
 With cruel, wolfish hunger on my life,
 And stories shall be told of how I died
 Linking my name with honour at the end
 That was in life unfortunate indeed.
 O Love ! that should have lasted all my life,
 Be thy slain moments all comprest in one—
 Then let the parting sigh which leaves my lips
 Be wafted to her feet. Thus be avenged
 Thy son's death, Cræsus ! (*Raises the dagger.*)

Hold ! hold ! It is I.

What wouldst thou with that dagger? Oh! I thought
Of this—I am in time to save thee—

No!

ARIENIS. Give me the weapon—

Hither ! let me drink

Once more the thrilling luxury of soul
To soul abandoned from thine earnest eyes
And then—

ARIENIS. Thou wilt not die?

I must ! I must !

I would not die ; but, did I live, new graves
Would open at each guilty step I took
Upon a lasting earthquake, and my friends,
With eyes that dragged mine from their deep-set caves
Would sink around, with mild, reproachful glances.
Tempt not Adrastus to such crime as this.
Gods ! how I love thee, thus to linger here.
O pardon me, ye slain ones !
This trembling frame is not a marble form
Of justice, with cold head and ne'er a heart—
I cannot do it, if she looks thus—Take
Thy passionate eyes away—thou kill'st the soul
Of honour in me with thy bribe of love—
Away ! wouldst thou betray me ?

No—but live !

All wish it, and my father yearns to thee—
And I! Hast thou not won this poor heart? No!
'Twas thine ere thou didst claim it, but thou saidst
That thou didst love me. I know 'tis not much
To a great soul like thine to be beloved
Of any woman; yet think how I'll love
And worship thee and know no other gaze,
Hearing no other footstep than thine own,

Thine eager slave, thy smiling minister.
 Oh ! leave me not alone—Alone ! it is
 A hollow, frightful word—Thou shalt not die
 Alone, if thou wilt die ; yet live for Arienis.

ADRASTUS. I would not change this agony of Love
 To be unknown to Sorrow ; but 'tis vain.
 There is a gulf between us living which
 I will o'erleap to hover round thee. Say,
 Thou'lt sometimes weep for me and think me near,
 My soul dissolved in sunshine on thy path,
 And, when thou hearest music, sighing in
 Each softest, lingering fall—Oh ! speak, my love.

ARIENIS. I am but a weak girl, not eloquent,
 Or I would bid thee live in such a strain,
 That woods and mountains and the deep blue skies
 Should thrill to hear it—Live ! oh ! only live,
 And we will mourn together and build tombs
 Watered with pious tears unto the slain.
 See ! on my knees I pray—That steel doth pierce
 My poor brain—Sheathe it, or strike here ! I'll die
 As well as thou canst.

ADRASTUS. How I tremble !
 Spirit of justice, throned upon the base
 Of the firm-balanced universe, whose breath
 Doth animate the being passionless
 Of Him who places us for trial here,
 That we may merit a more glorious state
 In the bright chambers of the dazzling sun,
 Where, methinks, Spirits dwell, oh ! aid me ! nerve
 My conscious soul unto thy bidding pure—
 Now the proud flow of noble thought doth rush
 Back to my faltering soul—
 Now, as I look up to yon halcyon deep
 Of the far, waveless ocean swimming blue
 High o'er all mortal heads,

Whose flashing jewels glitter fast above
 Set in Time's thought-seen diadem,
 My aching soul doth thirst to disappear
 Lapped in the distant softness to dim rest,
 Earth, sorrow, passion, all, but one sweet dream
 Banished, forgotten ever. (*Places ARIENIS gently on the ground,*
after embracing her.) She sleeps now—
 This is the moment. What are yon lights? Hark!
 They come to seek her—It is well—Now! (*Stabs himself on the*
Tomb.) Brother!
 Atys! I see your smiling faces near.
 It is not death that steals me thus away—
 Hark! whence those pearly sounds? My bride, my love,
 Hither! to life—Adrastus calls thee—come! [*Dies.*]

Scene 9. Slow Music heard. Enter LYDIS, bringing flowers to the Tomb.

LYDIS. How quick the moon hath risen! her pale light
 Peered through the wide trees on the dusky ground
 On our sad road making white lines like bones
 That bleach upon some night-roofed battle-field.
 And doth warm Atys lie in that cold spot
 Away from all he loved? (*A groan heard from ARIENIS.*) Hark
 what was that?
 Methought I heard a groan from out the tomb—
 Ah! what is this I see?

Enter LYDIAN GIRLS, &c. They see ARIENIS, and surround her with dismay.

My cousin here?—

How came she out?

ATTENDANT. We knew not she had left

The palace. Since her brother's death she hath scarce spoken
 To any of us. Sometimes a great sigh
 Would leave her lips apart, and she would look
 Startled around on each of us, like one
 That sought her pardon with imploring eyes
 From sternest judges; then a sickly smile
 A human twilight something less than gloom
 Would glimmer o'er her pale, transparent cheek,
 And then she would fall back, as if there were
 No joy, hope, wish, change—nought save blank despair.

[*ARIENIS gradually awaking.*

ARIENIS. Thou shalt not! Hide that gleaming horror there.
 My father had a dream. Nay, that is well—
 Smother it in thy mantle, thus—Again!
 With trembling eagerness it thirsts for blood—
 Hide it, my love—
 I cannot look upon it—Mine eyes ache—
 Thou dost not press me to thine arms, Adrastus!
 Where art thou? Who are ye, with frightened looks?
 He will not do it. Let me go—methought
 Just now his voice did call me to the tomb,
 Less sad than 'twas before, to pray with him.

[*Rushes to the Tomb.*

What is that heaped and ghastly form? Whose blood
 Bubbles to my numb feet? I dream not; see!
 It is Adrastus, dead! He would not live—
 Why didst thou tell me not, and then we might
 Have died together? Now I linger but
 A brief sad hour. Why hold the garlands, till
 They grow to your wan fingers? Strew around!
 Ye have more need now. Strew around, I say!

[*Falls into the arms of LYDIS.*

LYDIS. Bear her up gently; aid me! she doth faint;
 Bring her unto the palace—It were well
 That Cæsus know not this fresh woe to-night. [Exeunt.

Scene 10. The Council-hall of CRÆSUS. CRÆSUS on his Throne.

AMBASSADORS, OFFICERS, ATTENDANTS, &c.

CRÆSUS. Give me a mirror, quick!
That I may see if I am still a king.
Cyrus defy our power? By the gods!
Our blood doth boil again. Send Adrastus hither,
He shall chastise this insolence—I had
A son who should have done it. It is well
They chafe me thus. Why do ye all gaze so?
Speak, I command you.

OFFICER. Sire! The man is dead
Whom thou didst ask for—

CRÆSUS. Dead! How?

OFFICER. He was found
At midnight by some mourners wandering by
Upon the tomb of Atys, where his blood
Like a libation flowed around—his hand
Clasped tight a dagger; whilst a glorious smile,
Such as in life not one of us e'er saw
Upon that patient and worn countenance
Left its sweet impress on his parted lip.

CRÆSUS. Alas! he should have lived, and thus have been
A son to my old age. He could not brook
My fierce reproaches, though I pardoned him.
He was more generous than Cræsus. Strange
How to my heart he grew—

Enter a MESSENGER in haste.

CRÆSUS. Speak! Who art thou?
That with such wild, affrighted visage break'st
Within the circle of our grief, like one
By some new woe accredited?

MESSENGER. My Liege!

'Mid the assembled multitude without
The dumb hath spoken syllabing "Beware!"

CRÆSUS. The warning of the gods!

Enter a LADY of the Court.

LADY.

O King! I fear

To speak my woeful tidings. Late last night
Thy royal daughter sought the tomb where lie
The nation's buried hopes—she would insist
Herself to carry garlands. Thither come,
She saw the Phrygian lying newly slain,
And swooned with horror, pillowing her blanched cheek
On bruised lilies and pale violets;
And thus she lay like Dian's effigy
O'erthrown by the rude winds. She breathed till now—
I have no voice to finish.

CRÆSUS.

'Tis enough!

The wrath of Heaven present bends me low,
Till my white hairs escaped from kingly crown
Do grovel in the dust. O Pride! O Pomp!
Why are your mocking voices dumb that late
Did soothe my jealous ear? but in your place
Steals a small cry from lowly roof and chills
My conscience, telling me that all is just.
Rich, I forgot the poor—proud, thought the gods
My equals—graced with fortune, power, more
Than ever other mortal blest, I thought
They did become me. Selfish, opulent,
I gave not. Solon! Solon! thou wast wise—
Saying with accents calm that greatness might
Desert the side of Cræsus, leaving him
To link his arm with Sorrow, pace by pace
Guiding his faltering footsteps to the tomb
He had forgotten. Let all Sardis mourn
The treble death that numbs my faded brow

With stern reality. Give plenteous alms
 That they may bless him dead and pray for me
 Unwilling living—Hang mute sable forth
 From darkened windows. To my people sad
 Proclaim two years of mourning—They will find
 Fresh joys, their young hope witheréd ; but I
 Alone must weep for ever, hope no more—
 Chambered with Grief, Death waiting at the door.

*[A great disturbance is heard from without,
 and cries of "Cyrus !" "Cyrus !" "The
 Enemy !" The Courtiers assume attitudes
 of dismay. As the Curtain falls, slow
 and solemn Music is played.]*

The Curtain falls.

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